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FREE

Plans Announced To Develop Alexandria Theatre

By Thomas K. Pendergast

District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan negotiated a delay from the San Francisco Historic Preservation Commission to consider giving the Alexandria Theatre "landmark status," after announcing the theater building's owners agreed to work with her office on a residential housing development plan.

This announcement came more than a month after the owner, Yorke Lee of Timespace Alexandria LLC, went before the San Francisco Board of Appeals asking them to rescind a Notice of Violation (NOV) issued by the San Francisco Department of Building Inspection (DBI) last January after storms that month made the blade sign of the theater building unsafe.

At a press conference in front of the theater on Sept. 19, Chan and Lee announced they have tentatively agreed to support a 76-unit development within the theater building, although details of the plan have yet to be worked out.

"We're going to have a discussion, with the help of our city attorney, with our Office of Economic Workforce Development team to negotiate a development agreement to make this a site where we will have 76 units of housing, with affordable housing units on site, which is what the Richmond really needs," Chan said. "At the same time, with the help of the City and working with Mr. Lee and his group, how do we also preserve that history and the iconic features like the marquee and the sign?

"How do we preserve it but also create some flexibility for housing and development, because that's what we need and I think we can do that," she said. "People said 'that's not possible. You can only have one or the other.' We're going to say that we're going to work

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Richmond Turns Out for Seventh Autumn Moon Fest

By Nicole Gonzales

Residents and visitors filled Clement Street on a sunny Richmond District day to celebrate Chinese culture, heritage and art for the seasonal Autumn Moon celebration.

Held on Saturday, Sept. 9, between Seventh and 10th avenues, the festival brought together community members, vendors, organizations, government officials and entertainers.

"When we started seven years ago, our goal was really about bringing more culture out to the Richmond," said District 19 Assemblymember Phil Ting. "There are so many families here that are already celebrating the autumn festival in their homes, we're just trying to get them to be out on the streets to celebrate

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Above: Members of the Chinese Folk Dance Association perform a group number for the Autumn Moon Festival audience. Founded in 1959, the organization has held regular performances across the Bay Area highlighting Chinese dance, music and art. *Photos by Nicole Gonzales.*

Left: Traditional dragon dancers of the One Tribe Martial Arts Academy perform on the main stage of the 2023 Richmond District Autumn Moon Festival.

Lease Signed to Bring Back Eateries at Old Cliff House

By Thomas K. Pendergast

Almost three years after the Cliff House restaurant at Lands End became another business casualty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Park Service (NPS) announced a new lease has been signed by Sutro Lands End Partners LLC to operate a restaurant in that building.

The new name for it has not been made public. It might not keep the name "Cliff House" because the Hountalas family that ran the restaurant has trademarked the name and wants payment in order to allow the building to continue to be called the Cliff House.

The NPS says the property will include several dining options, including a new café in an area formerly used as a rental, while the old café known as the Lands End Lookout will also come back operated by the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy.

The opening date has not been set, although it is expected to be sometime next year. Sutro Lands End Partners, LLC, will be renovating the space in the meantime.

"We are excited to maintain this public space and invite a new operator to provide a dining experience that is loved by our community," said David Smith, general superintendent for the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. "We are absolutely grateful to our community for their support and patience during the extended vacancy and look forward to working with this new partner on public offerings at this iconic site."

The lease will be in place for up to 20 years.

"Since 1863, there has been a Cliff House perched on that dramatic bluff welcoming locals and visitors to come and be inspired by the views of the Pacific and perhaps share a drink or a meal with friends and family," said Adam Leff, a San Francisco attorney who has been involved in rejuvenating other California landmarks into popular destinations like the Malibu Pier. "We are honored to have been chosen by the National Park Service to be the stewards of this beloved venue for the next

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Tunnel Records Opens Richmond Store in 4 Star Theater

By Asha Ingram

Ben Wintroub (left), owner of Tunnel Records, with 4 Star Theater co-owners Adam Bergeron (center) and his wife Jaimi Holker pose together in front of the 4 Star Theater on the corner of Clement Street and 23rd Avenue in the Outer Richmond. *Courtesy photo.*

Ben Wintroub of the Sunset District's Tunnel Records announced he will team up with Adam Bergeron in the Richmond District's 4 Star Theater. Starting Friday, Oct. 6, Tunnel Records' merchandise can be also purchased at the theater.

Originally opening its Taraval Street location in 2017, Tunnel Records has been known for selling funky and unique records, merchandise and more. According to its website, the store was opened with a single goal: "To be the perfect neighborhood record store. No pretentiousness, just good vibes …."

For Bergeron, the operator of the 4 Star, as well as the Balboa and Vogue theaters, a team up like this has long been a dream of his. The merger combines his love of movies and music.

"I always dreamed of there being a record store in the gallery space," he said. He is a regular at Tunnel Records, which he regards as the "best curated record store in San Francisco."

"It has the most friendly and knowledgeable staff," Bergeron said. "The vibe they put out there is second to none."

So, when the opportunity to team up was presented to him, it seemed too good to pass up.

"When Ben Wintroub mentioned it as a possibility, it just seemed like such a perfect mix." Bergeron said. "I think they're pretty like-minded businesses. It's pretty easy to draw a thread between movie and record businesses." he explained.

Opening in 1921, the 4 Star closed in March 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, and shortly thereafter underwent massive renovations. The theater reopened in December 2022 showcasing many changes, such as switching from three theaters to one, expanding the single theater and renovating its lobby. The theater restored its original architecture, bringing back details like vestibule archways and red velvet draping.

Since its reopening, the theater has started to see a change in business.

"It has slowly and steadily gotten better and better," Bergeron said.

The 4 Star Theater's newly renovated space has also proven beneficial for the team-up with Tunnel Records. The 4 Star's second theater has been turned into a gallery space. Bergeron saw that this new space would be a perfect for this exact team-up.

"(The space) is almost just shaped like a record store

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Looking Back

Kinen Carvala

Japanese Stone

How could the same man be the target of a U.S. declaration of war and be commemorated in Golden Gate Park?

Hirohito, born in 1901, married his wife Nagako in 1924 and ascended to the Japanese throne as Emperor in 1926.

Before Hirohito's visit to Washington D.C. and San Francisco, Congress passed the Japan-United States Friendship Act of 1975 to support trade and cultural exchanges between the two countries. President Gerald Ford signed the bill on Oct. 20, 1975, according to congress.gov.

The emperor and empress flew into San Francisco International Airport on a rainy Oct. 9, 1975, greeted by the Lowell High School band playing "California, Here I Come," as reported by the San Francisco Chronicle.

Between visits to Japantown and the Golden Gate Bridge, the emperor's motorcade stopped at the Botanical Garden (then known as the Strybing Arboretum) in Golden Gate Park for a small reception where the emperor gave a short speech to 200 Japanese Americans, according to the Chronicle.

The Japanese text inscribed in stone – installed later to commemorate the San Francisco visit – is written in columns read from right to left, following traditional East Asian writing conventions. The third of the stone on the right side mentions the emperor and empress. The center third of the stone commemorates the visit. The leftmost third lists Consul General Hidenori Sueoka representing Japan.

Lower on the stone is English text on a small separate plaque: "Erected by the Welcoming Committee of Japanese Americans in Northern and Central California."

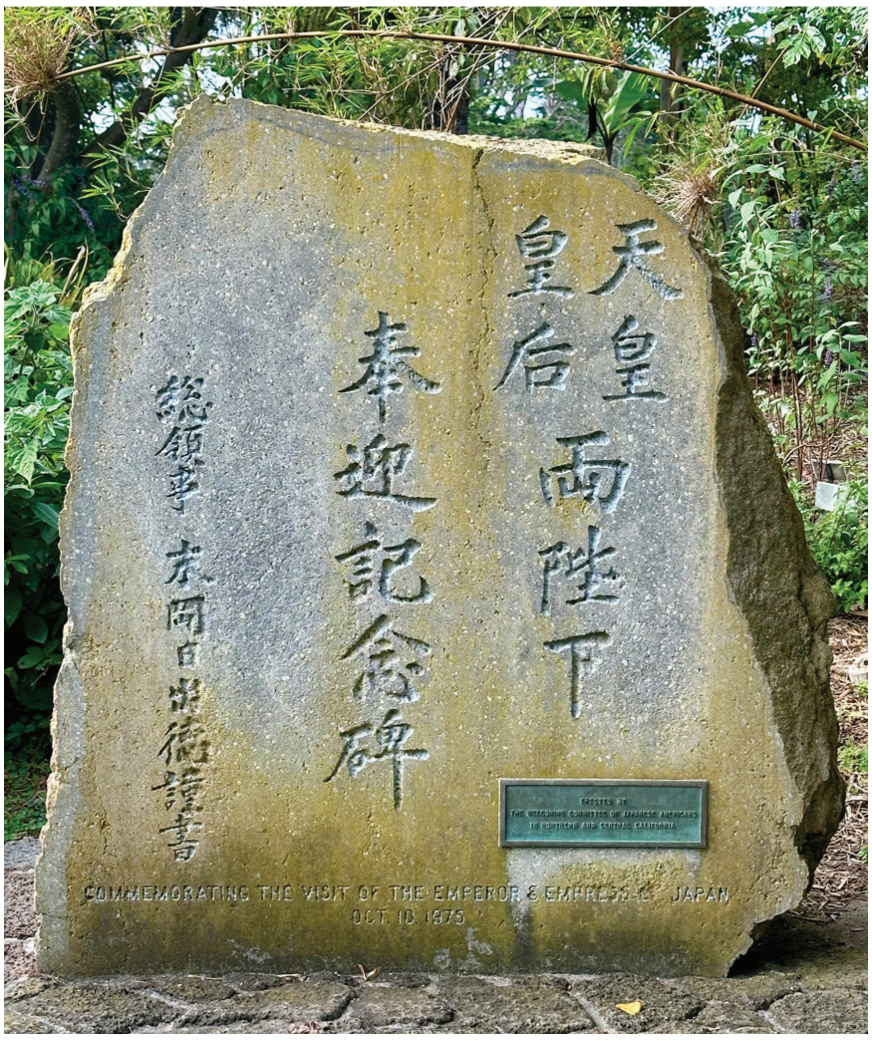
Carved near the bottom edge of the stone is:

"Commemorating the visit of the emperor and empress of Japan, Oct. 10, 1975."

The San Francisco Recreation and Park Commission accepted the gift of the stone and plaque in a resolution, according to commission minutes of Jan. 8, 1976. The gift was valued at approximately $2,500 at the time (roughly $13,800 in 2023). The stone is about five-feet tall, four-feet, six-inches wide and 22-inches thick from front to back.

In 1941, after Japanese policymakers (including Hirohito, according to Herbert P. Bix's biography) decided to attack the U.S. navy base of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, the U.S. entered World War II joining the Allies against the Axis Powers of Japan, Germany and Italy. In 1945, facing Soviet invaders from the north, U.S. invaders from the south and two atomic bombs dropped on Japan by the U.S., Hirohito announced on Aug. 15 that Japan would surrender. Japanese representatives signed the Instrument of Surrender on the deck of the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay on Sept. 2, 1945.

Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers Douglas McArthur oversaw the occupation of Japan and a new Japanese constitution in which Japan renounced war and the emperor was made a symbolic figurehead. Two treaties were signed in San Francisco's War Memorial Opera House on Sept. 8, 1951. A peace treaty between Japan and the WWII Allied forces placed the Ryukyu island chain (which includes Okinawa Island) in southwestern Japan under American administration and ended the occupation of the rest of Japan. A security treaty allowed the U.S. to maintain a military presence in Japan to deter other countries from attacking. A replacement security treaty passed in 1960 between the U.S. and Japan included an explicit American commitment to defend Japan. There was opposition. Some 30 million people – a third of the population of Japan – participated in protests against the treaty at their peak in June 1960, according to historian Nick Kapur. Press secretary to the U.S. president, James Hagerty, had his car mobbed by protesters on his visit to Tokyo on June 10, 1960. Hagerty had to be rescued by helicopter, according to a telegram from the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo to the U.S. Department of State. During U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower's visit to Okinawa nine days later, his car took the back roads to avoid crowds shouting anti-American slogans, the New York Times reported. Eisenhower's visit to Tokyo was cancelled.



Hidden in the "Temperate Asia" section of Golden Gate Park's Botanical Garden, a stone monument commemorates the visit of the emperor and empress of Japan on Oct. 10, 1975.

The Ryukyu Islands were returned to Japanese administration by 1973, although the U.S. still maintains a military presence in Okinawa and other parts of Japan.

Hirohito died in 1989 at age 87 and Empress Nagano died in 2000 at age 97. The current emperor of Japan, Naruhito, is Hirohito's grandson. The current head of government is Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

The monument is in the Temperate Asia section of the San Francisco Botanical Garden. The Garden is free for San Francisco residents with proof of residency. The Garden opens daily at 7:30 a.m. It closes one hour after last entry, which is 5 p.m. in October until the first Sunday in November, through January, when last entry is 4 p.m.

The monument is close to the main entrance northwest of Ninth Avenue near Lincoln Way. After entering the garden, turn left onto the path around the Great Meadow past the monastery stones. Turn left again into the wide paved footpath for the Temperate Asia collection. After following the paved path for about 120 feet, on your right (northwest) side, notice stone stairs leading to the monument. If you pass ponds along the paved path, you've gone too far west.

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Booooo!

Find an archive of Kinen Carvala's "Looking Back" columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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Publisher and Editor-in-Chief: Michael Durand
Editor: Paul Kozakiewicz
Writers: Linda Badger, Erin Bank, Noma Faingold,
Jonathan Farrell, Asha Ingram,
Clarisse Kim, Beth Lederer, Thomas K. Pendergast,
Jack Quach, Kate Quach, Alyson Wong
Photographers: Tyrone Bartoli, Noma Faingold, Clarisse Kim,
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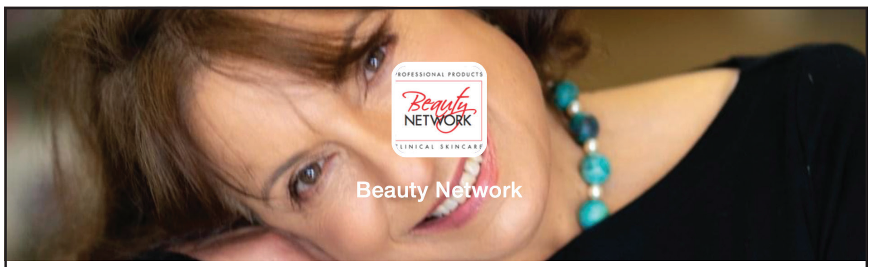

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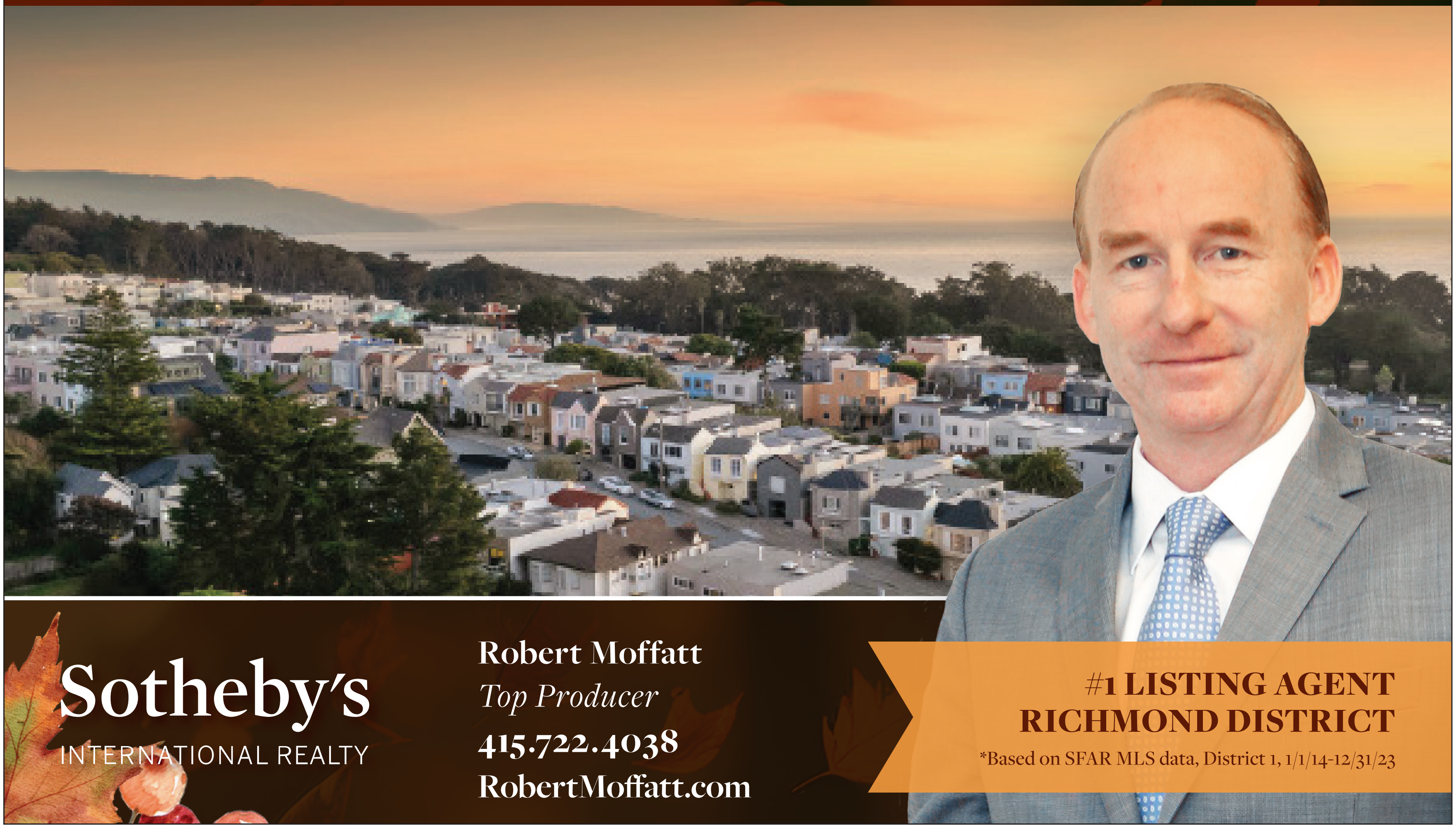

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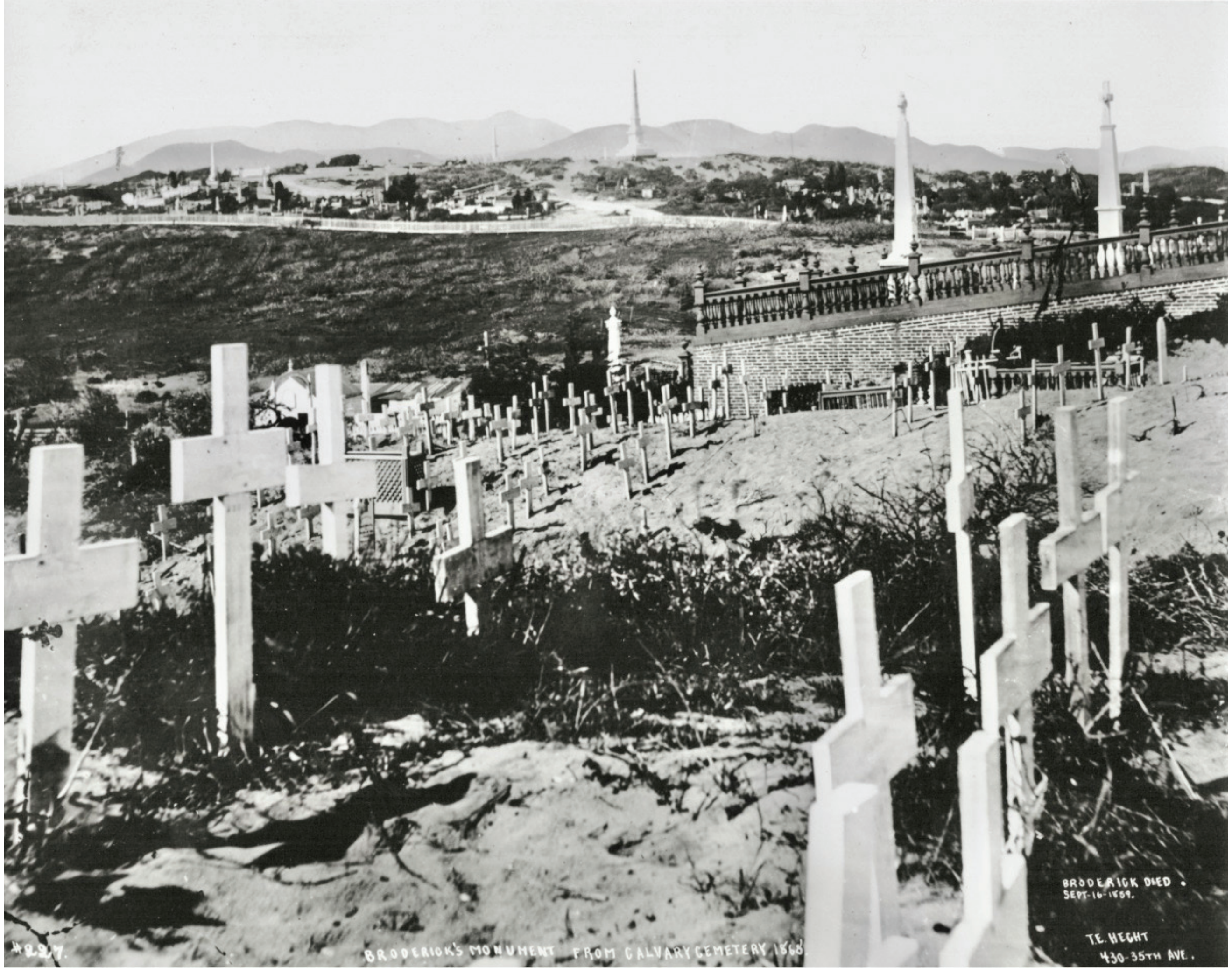
‘San Francisco’s Forgotten Cemeteries’ Reveals Richmond’s Past

By Erin Bank


#827.
BRODERICK'S MONUMENT FROM CALVARY CEMETERY 1868
BRODERICK DIED SEPT-16-1859.
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The monument marking Sen. David Broderick’s grave (the pointy one in the far distance) was in the Laurel Hill Cemetery, near where the Trader Joe’s on Masonic Avenue is today. In the foreground is Calvary Cemetery, on Lone Mountain. *Courtesy photo.*

Paris has its catacombs. London has a crypt in St. Paul’s Cathedral. San Francisco doesn’t have cemeteries. Instead, spread across the hills of Colma, just south of the City, headstones mark the graves of San Francisco’s dead.

But San Francisco’s cemeteries haven’t always been in Colma. In fact, the Richmond District has a role in the history of San Francisco’s hidden cemeteries.

“San Francisco’s Forgotten Cemeteries, a Buried History” is the title of a new book by Glen Park resident Beth Winegarner. She digs into the stories of the birth and death of cemeteries once located within San Francisco city limits – and, she says, still occupy the land underneath some of the Richmond’s most famous landmarks. She blends historical record with personal stories, with the hope that San Franciscans can keep this history alive as an homage to the dead.

“Without knowledge, we can’t remember them,” Winegarner said.

In 1853, the existing Mission Dolores and municipal Yerba Buena cemeteries were becoming too small to keep up with the booming population – and associated deaths – of gold rush San Francisco. City officials set their sights on a swath of land on the outskirts of town, far away from the dirt and disease of downtown, somewhere development was sure never to touch, in an area that we now call Laurel Heights, Anza Vista and the Inner Richmond. Furthermore, there was a growing trend of “rural” or “garden” cemeteries: lush, verdant land where visitors could picnic and spend a day. Lone Mountain Cemetery, as it was dedicated in 1854, was eventually partitioned into four main cemeteries: Calvary, Odd Fellows (including the still-existing Columbarium), Masonic and Laurel Hill. An estimated 136,000 dead were buried here.

There remained the problem of a municipal cemetery, where those unaffiliated with the groups running these cemeteries (religious and fraternal organizations), including the indigent, could be buried (not to mention a place for those buried at Yerba Buena to be reinterred to make room for City Hall). The solution: City Cemetery, built on 200 acres bound by 33rd and 48th avenues, Geary Boulevard (then Point Lobos Toll Road), and the Pacific Ocean. Opened in 1870, City Cemetery buried up to 40 people per day, up to nearly 30,000 graves in total. However, record-keeping was spotty at best, and much was lost in the fires following the 1906 earthquake, so it’s impossible to know exactly how many people were buried there – and how many perhaps still rest there.

“Don’t dig in Lincoln Park,” Winegarner said.

By the 1890s, however, these cemeteries were no longer on the outskirts of town. The dead now had living neighbors, who became concerned about the location of the cemeteries. Developers wanted roads to be extended through the cemeteries, and residents and public health officials worried about sanitation and water quality. Winegarner’s book reveals the forces behind the eventual banning of the sale of all new lots for future burials, in 1896, by Mayor Aldoph Sutro.

Sutro, of course, is an integral part of the Richmond’s history, and his antics leading to the eventual demise of all San Francisco cemeteries are chronicled in Winegarner’s book. Before he was mayor, Sutro, in no coincidence, bought up the land surrounding City Cemetery and was one of the loudest opponents of the cemetery (mostly, it seems, because he wanted to use the land to serve his own purposes, including building railroad tracks to reach the Cliff House).

Unfortunately, sales of new lots were a main source of income for upkeep, and soon the cemeteries fell into complete disrepair. Winegarner includes stories of the various illicit ways the grounds were used and abused. When they could, the groups that managed the various cemeteries began reinterring in Colma, usually by creating a mass grave for those remains and selling the new plots for future burials. As bodies were moved, the gravestones were used in city construction projects and can still be seen around the City, including in Aquatic Park and Ocean Beach.

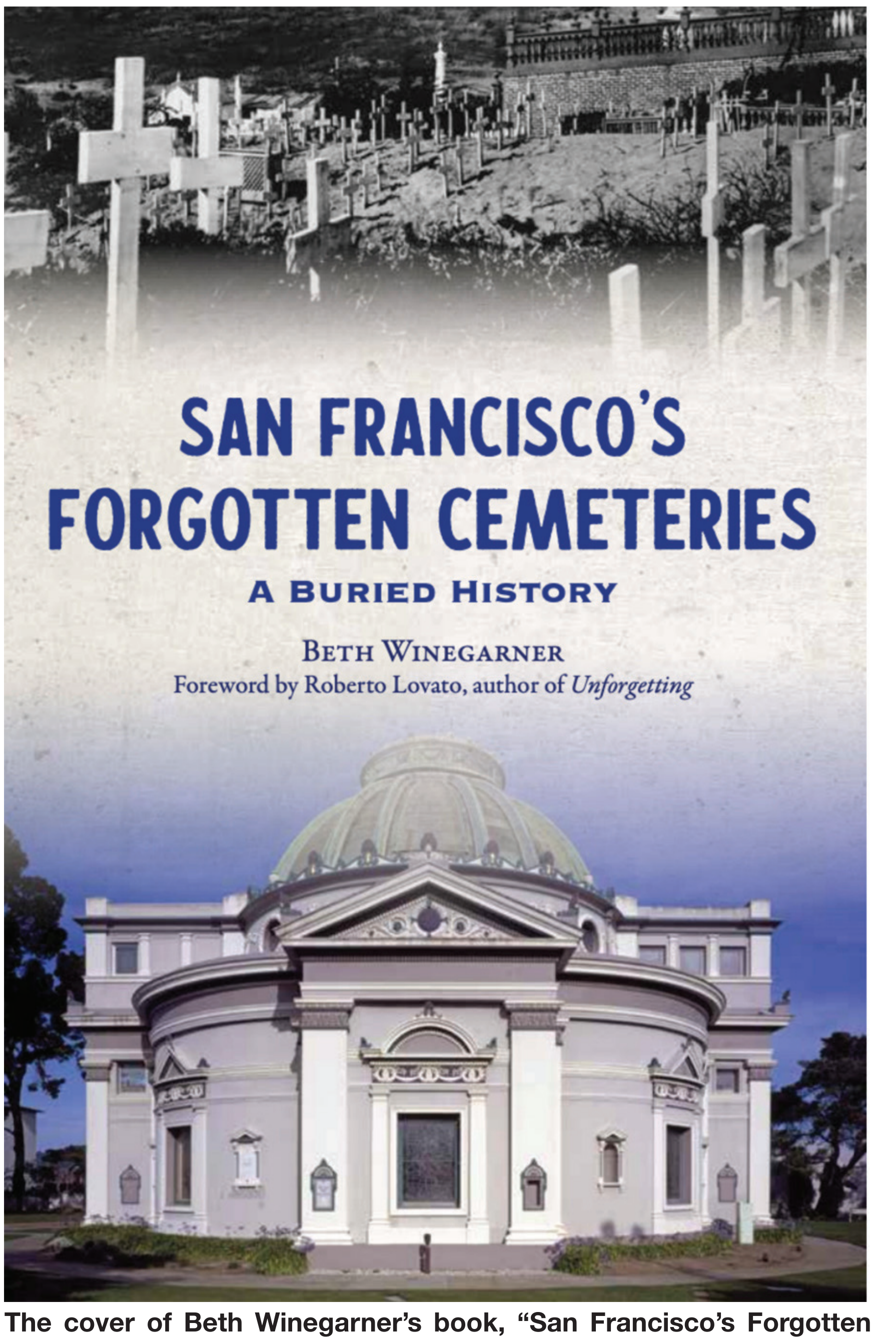
All new burials were finally banned in 1901 (a change Sutro did not live to see), but the existing cemeteries were allowed to remain in San Francisco until 1937, when they were ordered to relocate. These years proved a grisly period, as individual cemeteries grappled with re-interment and closing. Details in Winegarner’s book include the irreverent ways the graves were exhumed and the staggering numbers of remains still thought to exist under the ground (and those that have been found during construction projects to this day).

These actions served as the impetus for Winegarner’s book. She wants San Francisco to remember those residents who ended up in mass graves in Colma, those residents whose final resting place was lost to poor record-keeping, and those who remain in unmarked graves somewhere underneath houses, museums and golf courses. Her book is also a commentary on how American society doesn’t talk about death, which, she says, allows things like the treatment of San Francisco’s dead to happen.

“There are some neighborhood antics that seem perhaps familiar to some today. Of course, it’s relatable that you don’t want to live next to a smelly cemetery. But is the solution to get rid of it or is it to improve its upkeep?” Winegarner said.

By writing about the history of San Francisco cemeteries, however macabre it may seem, Winegarner allows us to remember the dead even when we can’t visit their graves.

“San Francisco’s Hidden Cemeteries: A Buried History,” published by The History Press, is available at bookstores, including Green Apple Books. Winegarner will be giving a free talk at the Columbarium on Oct. 27, with fellow cemetery writer Loren Rhoads – eventbrite.com/e/why-we-love-cemeteries-tickets-699304126467. Learn more at bethwinegarner.com.



The cover of Beth Winegarner’s book, “San Francisco’s Forgotten Cemeteries,” shows the Richmond District’s Columbarium of San Francisco. It is located at the end of the Lorraine Court cul de sac, just south of Geary Boulevard and east of Arguello Boulevard. *Courtesy photo.*

News Analysis

Linda Badger

Homeless Encampment Removals

Homeless encampments represent a public failure – a manifestation of the desperation of those living on the streets and a threat to the health, safety and livelihoods of our neighborhoods.

To address this problem, San Francisco maintains free shelters and enforces laws and ordinances against "urban camping." Unlike many cities, San Francisco does not have an outright ban on people sleeping or lying on sidewalks. For example, San Francisco Police Code Section 168 states that, "during the hours between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m., it is unlawful to sit or lie down upon a public sidewalk, or any object placed upon a public sidewalk."

Laws against tents or lodgings are more stringent. Police Code Section 169 state: "In the City and County of San Francisco, it is unlawful to place an encampment upon a public sidewalk." Prior to removing any encampment, however, this provision requires that the City give encampment dwellers 24-hour advance notice, store their personal property for later retrieval, and most importantly, offer available shelter to all inhabitants of the encampment being removed. To follow this policy, City officials must find an available bed in a shelter to offer to individuals before removing their encampments. If the individual refuses shelter, the encampment can be removed.

Despite these laws and ordinances, homeless encampments persist. Homeless advocates blame the City's severe shortfall in shelter beds. Lately politicians, including Mayor London Breed and Gov. Gavin Newsom, have been blaming the courts. In the Ninth Circuit, courts have found cities liable for violating the Constitution's Eighth Amendment ban on "cruel and unusual punishment" by criminalizing homeless encampments when their inhabitants have nowhere else to go. The legal issue of whether the Eighth Amendment can be used for this purpose is likely to go before the United States Supreme Court soon. In the meantime, local politicians continue to point fingers at a "sweeping" District Court Preliminary Injunction inhibiting encampment removals in San Francisco since 2022.

This controversial injunction resulted from a lawsuit brought in District Court by the Coalition on Homelessness and the ACLU on behalf of seven homeless individuals who alleged the City violated their Constitutional rights by removing their encampments without first offering them an available shelter bed, as required by San Francisco's own policies. The Magistrate judge noted that had San Francisco followed its own policies, it would not have run afoul of the Constitution. Because the Magistrate judge believed that homeless advocates had presented compelling evidence of illegal removals by the City, and that the City had presently only "thin" evidence that it made prior offers of shelter, she entered a preliminary injunction to prevent future violations when enforcing five "sit, lie or sleep" laws and ordinances, pending a full trial on the merits in 2024.

The wording of the preliminary injunction enjoins the City from enforcing or threatening to enforce five laws or ordinances that "prohibit involuntarily homeless individuals from sitting, lying or sleeping on public property," including San Francisco Police Codes 168 and 169. The Court quotes Ninth Circuit precedent holding that individuals given access to "adequate temporary shelter," would not be considered "involuntarily homeless," and even notes that San Francisco's written policy of offering shelter before removing an encampment is constitutional.

In this context, the preliminary injunction appears to require San Francisco to do little more than follow its existing written policy of offering a homeless individual an available shelter before removing his/her encampment. If that individual rejects the offer, they would not be "involuntarily homeless," and the injunction would not apply.

Paradoxically, the City claimed that the injunction prohibits San Francisco from removing any encampments unless and until it can provide enough shelter beds for all of its thousands of homeless inhabitants. According to the San Francisco city attorney: "[T]he district court's ruling, requiring that San Francisco provide housing for every person experiencing homelessness before it can enforce many of its most important laws as to particular encampments, places San Francisco in an impossible situation."

With a homeless population of more than 7,000 and shelter beds for approximately 3,000, San Francisco's interpretation of the preliminary injunction means that its encampment laws would not be enforceable in the foreseeable future. Because of the injunction, San Francisco Police were informed in a department notice that they could "NOT use, enforce, or threaten to enforce the [five laws and ordinances] to prohibit homeless individuals from sitting, lying or sleeping on public property."

San Francisco's draconian interpretation made the national news and angered many residents. The city attorney asked the Magistrate judge to clarify the injunction, but she rejected the request on procedural grounds, inviting a proper motion. Instead, the City appealed the issue to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. On Aug. 23, while Breed conducted a rally against the "crippling" injunction outside of the courthouse, the City asked the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals to, among other things, vacate or modify the injunction.

During the argument before the Court of Appeals, the judges as well as attorneys for the plaintiffs appeared perplexed by the City's argued interpretation, which one judge said seemed "manufactured." Ultimately, the Court of Appeals declined to modify the injunction because, "the parties agree that a person is not involuntarily homeless if they have declined a specific offer of available shelter or otherwise have access to such shelter or the means to obtain it." In other words, San Francisco can enforce its sit, lie, sleep and encampment rules as long as it offers an available shelter bed to the individual whose encampment is being removed, which was basically SFPD's pre-injunction written policy.

Next year, assuming there is no settlement of the matter, the District Court will hold a trial to determine if San Francisco violated the Constitutional rights of seven homeless plaintiffs whose encampments were

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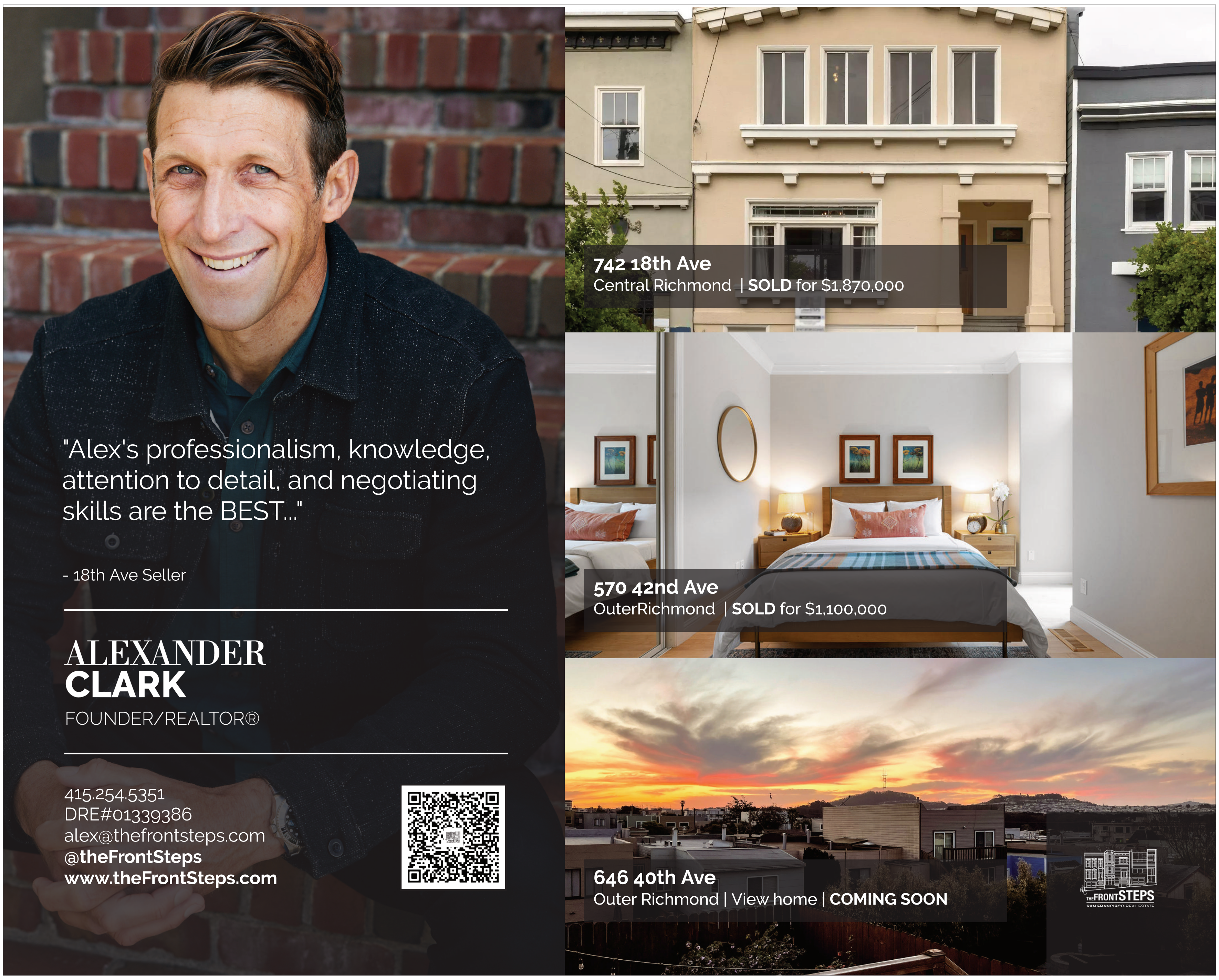

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Choosing the Right Agent

There is no question that our real estate market has changed this year. With fewer sales and a tougher market to navigate, how do you choose the agent that is right for you?

With more than 5,000 real estate agents selling properties in San Francisco, how do you go about choosing an agent to service your real estate needs? When choosing one, do you choose a friend, relative, neighbor or co-worker? Should you work with an agent at a large firm, a small firm, a franchise or an independent?

While there are exceptions to every rule, and every marketplace is different, here are some solid rules to apply when you want the best representation to protect your interests. Just remember, in the end, it's your money that is at stake!

The real estate profession is plagued by high turnovers. Statistics show that 50% of Realtors do not make it past their first year in business, and then another 50% of those who remain do not make it past their second year. This creates a workforce that is made up of many newcomers. While there are brand-new agents with good intentions, why trust one of the largest investments you will ever make or sell to someone without experience?

Always look for an agent with at least a few years of experience. Anyone still in the business for a few years has probably at least learned the fundamentals of real estate; they made the cut and have transitioned into being an experienced agent. Especially in today's changing real estate market, a skilled negotiator and their awareness of the marketplace can assure that you can obtain the best possible price if you are the seller and that you are not overpaying for a property if you are a buyer.

Another problem we have in the industry is a large number of part-time salespeople. They have either retired from some other career, work in real estate seasonally (such as teachers working the summer in real estate) or are earning a second income for the family by working in real estate evenings and weekends.

No matter how long they have been in the business, their lack of a full-time commitment makes it impossible for them to keep up with the vast changes in the law, market conditions and current business practices that are occurring in the profession today. If an agent is not working full time, look for someone else.

Obtaining a real estate license is extremely easy. All someone has to do is to take a few classes and pass a multiple-choice exam and he or she can sell real estate. You cannot rely on licensing to indicate competence. Unfortunately, many agents' real estate education ends with their pre-licensing education. Look for someone who is educated in real estate and constantly attends seminars to learn the most current trends and selling techniques.

Before you hire an agent to help you buy or sell a home, you should interview at least three agents in person. In order to do this, first get recommendations from friends, family and neighbors. Then do some research on the internet to see what kind of marketing the various agents and companies are doing in your area and call the few that impress you. Then make brief fact-finding calls to determine which of the agents on your list are full time and experienced.

Richmond Homes Sold in September*

Address	Bed	Bath	Sq. Ft.	Price
136 Seal Rock Dr.	4	2	2,350	$1,550,000
554 45th Ave.	3	2	2,100	1,575,000
711 19th Ave.	3	2	1,500	1,650,000
633 Arguello Blvd.	4	2	1,870	1,682,500
830 46th Ave.	3	2	1,955	1,850,000
850 30th Ave.	3	2.5	2,125	2,000,000
65 Parker Ave.	4	4.5	4,500	6,775,000

**Partial listing. Source: M.L.S.*

The interview itself need not be a formal one. It is just a time for you to meet the agents, to explain your real estate needs, and to determine whether you would be comfortable working with him or her. Ask whatever questions you like, or simply explain your goals and listen carefully to what they propose to do to help you in attaining your them. Ask if they have been through a down real estate cycle like the one we are experiencing, and what they are doing differently to assist their clients during this time.

If you follow the suggestions above, you will find that there are excellent agents working for firms both large and small; both franchised and independent. Thus, the real decision must be made based on the competency of the individual agent you will be working with on a day-to-day basis, especially in this rapidly changing market.

John M. Lee is a broker with Compass specializing in the Richmond and Sunset districts. If you have any real estate questions, call him at 415-465-0505 or email at johnlee@isellsf.com. Find an archive of his columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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Cliff House

Continued from page 1

generation."

Leff is a San Francisco native who grew up in the Richmond District.

"San Francisco has been good to me and to my family ever since my grandparents arrived here during World War II," Leff stated in a press release. "I am well aware that it is a tough time to undertake a major hospitality project in San Francisco. It is an honor to be given the opportunity to restore this beloved landmark and doing so is my way of expressing my gratitude and lending a helping to our beautiful City at a moment when it can use help from all of us who live here."

The BCV Architecture + Interiors firm will be leading the repair and renovation of the building.

"BVC Architecture + Interiors is excited to be working with Sutro Lands End Partners to re-envision the iconic Cliff House," Hans Baldauf of BVC said. "BCV has been fortunate to work on bringing new life to other notable San Francisco buildings, including the Ferry Building and what is now the X (Twitter) building. Our goal will be to institute building improvements and décor that will create a warm welcome for arriving visitors, connecting them to the rich history of the building and its site, and encourage engagement with the natural environment through activation of the building's outdoor decks, terraces and street frontages.

"We see and opportunity to make the building dynamic by providing multiple food and retail offerings."

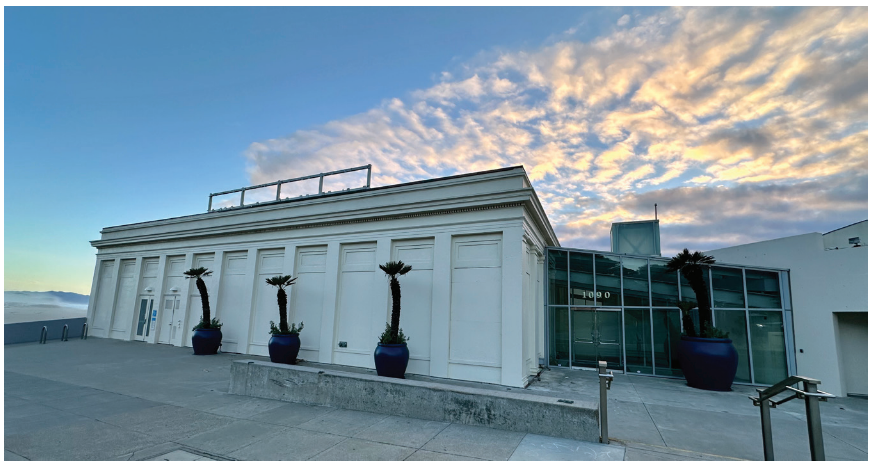
The Hi Neighbor Hospitality Group will be brought in as consultants for the project.

"We are thrilled to be partnering with Sutro Lands End partners," said co-founder Ryan Cole. "We look forward to bringing local hospitality businesses to this historic site that will offer a variety of food options at different price points. Each will demonstrate the depth and diversity of food and beverage talent in the Bay Area as well as showcase products from local and sustainable farmers, fisherman and food purveyors."

Earlier this year, District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan authored legislation to waive the major encroachment fee assessed on the Seal Rock Inn restaurant located at 545 Point Lobos Ave. near Lands End. Chan says this ordinance clears bureaucratic barriers for restaurants looking to open in the space and will help bring this legacy business back to life.

"I am pleased to welcome the new operator for the space, Sutro Lands End, reinvigorating our Outer Richmond neighborhood," Chan said. "The area is an iconic gathering point for generations of San Franciscans, offering the most beautiful views and creating a space for our communities and visitors. Now I look forward to an open dialogue exploring how we will continue the legacy of this space.

"It's hard to compare and compete against generations of San Franciscans' memories of that space," she said. "No matter what you do, it's hard to compete with that. So, it's a high expectation of what's to come. We want to make sure that they have something for the community and so, hopefully, make that transition just a little bit easier for everybody."



The building that was once home to the Cliff House restaurant has been leased to a development group which plans on opening several dining options in 2024. The metal frame atop the building once held the Cliff House sign. If the new operators want to bring back the historic title, they will need to negotiate with the previous operators who own the name's trademark. ***Photo by Michael Durand.***

POLICE BLOTTER

Graffiti Abatement Operation Arrest: Geary Boulevard and Masonic Avenue Aug. 30, 12:48 a.m.

The suspect was observed in the act of tagging the Geary tunnel wall under Masonic Avenue. The suspect finished the large tag then stood in #1 and #2 lanes of traffic to video and photograph his tag.

The suspect was detained, identified and arrested.

Aggravated Assault with Gun, Elder Abuse, Terrorist Threats, Dissuading/Threatening Witness, Firearm with Altered ID: 6800 Block of Geary Boulevard, Sept. 9, 10:41 p.m.

The victim was at home and observed his brother holding a meth pipe to their 96-year-old mother's mouth and lighting it with a torch. The victim said he told his brother, "No, don't! Stop that!"

The brother then pulled out a gun and pointed it at the victim saying, "Don't tell me what to do. I'm going to kill you."

The victim walked outside the house and called the Richmond Station, then went back inside the house. The brother said, "If you call the police, I will send my friends after you to kill you."

Evidence of the brother from prior days holding a meth pipe to their mother's mouth and using a torch to light it, with white smoke coming from the pipe, was seized. A loaded firearm, extra ammunition, meth pipe, and U.S. mail indicia were located during the search warrant service. The firearm's serial number was missing or altered on the gun. An elderly protection order was also granted and served.

The case was assigned to SFPD's Special Victims Unit, which is conducting the follow-up investigation.

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Commentary

Quentin L. Kopp

Restoring Electoral Sanity

Chief Justice Earl Warren of the United States Supreme Court in the 1950s and ‘60s (who swore me in as a lawyer entitled to practice law in the U.S. Supreme Court, which I never did!), when governor of California, began a political address thusly: “Ladies and gentlemen, I’m pleased to see the dense crowd here tonight.” A voice from the back shouted: “Don’t be too pleased. We ain’t all dense!”

Thanks to Sunset District resident Robert Guichard, San Francisco voters who aren’t dense will have the opportunity to restore electoral sanity to our beleaguered (if not beloved) Board of Supervisors next year. After the California Supreme Court’s August decision in a case in which the Pico Boulevard Neighborhood Association challenged under the California Civil Rights Act of 2012 the City of Santa Monica’s election of City Council members by at-large (all city voters) selections, and remanded the case to the Court of Appeal for further action. Guichard, advised by election laws specialty lawyers, produced a proposed Charter amendment to abolish district election of our 11 City Hall “beauties.” At press time, the city attorney was reviewing the proposal with 49,000 registered voters’ approval needed for the March 4, 2024 election. I anticipate endorsement of it by the San Francisco Taxpayers Association, of which I am president.

Guichard, not a politician, may be remembered by “old-timers” as the chief architect of the 1980 initiative restoring at-large supervisorial elections to San Franciscans and later an initiative which mandated the top supervisorial note-gutter as president of the Board of Supervisors. All this occurred after voters were hoodwinked by radical proponents of a “ward” system into abolishing at-large selection of supervisors and substituted election by 11 different districts. That prevailed until 1997 when then-Supervisor Barbara Kaufman persuaded the Board to revert to the district (i.e., ward) system.

Instead of requiring at least 100,000 votes for success, we San Francisco voters now also have “ranked-choice” voting which means someone can be elected to our governing legislative body with a paltry 8,237 votes, as Supervisor Matt Dorsey amassed last year to join these elite second floor of City Hall “mavens.”

The only difference in complete restoration of our historic system arises from that 2012 state law regarding civil rights which requires candidates to represent 11 different districts after being elected by voters throughout our city. Existing California law requires such system which Oakland used years ago regarding its City Council. Telephone Mr. Guichard at 415-661-7000 or me at 415-681-5555 if you would like to aid signature-gathering of registered voters or donate money to the campaign costs and stay tuned!

I neglected to inform readers last year of an ominous effort by President Joseph Biden to establish a new federal agency called the Disinformation Board which would’ve been part of the Department of Homeland Security. A coterie of opponents, Republicans, libertarians and even liberals, condemned the plan, comparing it to the “Ministry of Truth” from George Orwell’s novel “1984.” The White House had quietly announced the board’s creation in April 2022 to fight the spread of “disinformation” from agents of Russia, China and Iran. It can happen here.

Meanwhile, California’s gasoline tax soared in July 2023 to 57.9 cents per gallon, up from 53.9 cents per gallon, the highest in the nation. Remember when gasoline service stations posted signs telling customers the amount of gasoline taxes included in the price per gallon? No longer do customers with those evil non-electric motor vehicles receive such relevant information. And the smooth roadways which state gasoline taxes finance seem non-existent in much of San Francisco. One lovely exception exists on Junipero Serra Boulevard between Sloat Boulevard and Brotherhood Way; an antidote to the long beleaguered Taraval Street from 19th Avenue to Sunset Boulevard.

Thomas Jefferson, third president of the United States said it best: “That government is best which governs least.” That’ll nourish many of us until Halloween and, maybe, Thanksgiving. A nurse registering a new patient asked: “When is your birthday?” “Aug. 22,” replied the patient. The nurse asked: “What year?” “Every year,” answers the patient. Tra-boom!

Quentin Kopp is a former San Francisco supervisor, state senator, SF Ethics Commission member, president of the California High Speed Rail Authority governing board and retired Superior Court judge.

Commentary

Julie Pitta

Follow the Money

They burst on the political scene with harmless-sounding names – Neighbors for a Better San Francisco, TogetherSF Action, and GrowSF – and slick websites that describe what seem to be grassroots organizations.

Neighbors for a Better San Francisco calls itself “a group of San Franciscans … dedicated to supporting and empowering pragmatic, responsible and neighborhood-focused leaders and organizations.” TogetherSF Action encourages the civic-minded among us to join “thousands of others like you who are ready to commit to rewriting the future of our city.” GrowSF boasts that it “pursues common sense solutions to create a San Francisco that works for everyone.”

Sounds reasonable. Admirable, even. Except for a troubling fact: These organizations are fronts for the latest corporate interests looking to buy influence at City Hall.

Neighbors for a Better San Francisco, TogetherSF Action and Grow SF are Political Action Committees, exploiting a loophole in campaign finance law. By contributing to them – rather than to a candidate, directly – political donors can evade the $500 limit on campaign contributions. Money from groups like these will pour into the coffers of candidates who promise to carry out their agenda, one that benefits big business at the expense of regular San Franciscans.

These so-called “astroturf” organizations create the illusion of grassroots’ support, obscuring the involvement of their uber-wealthy founders. All the better to deceive voters often too busy to dig into details. Neighbors for a Better San Francisco is backed by billionaire investor William Oberndorf, a Republican who lives in Marin County, but spends lavishly on San Francisco political campaigns; TogetherSF Action is the pet project of billionaire venture capitalist Michael Moritz, another big player on the City’s political scene. GrowSF is the baby of tech veterans Steven Buss and Sachin Agarwal, who spent big in recent elections, toppling an incumbent on the Board of Supervisors.

What do they want? A San Francisco even more hospitable to their business interests. For decades, San Francisco has served as a laboratory for the high-tech industry; the driverless cars wreaking havoc on city streets are only the latest get-rich-quick scheme from the geniuses in Silicon Valley. They’re gambling that buying an elected official or two will allow them to conduct business as usual without the nuisance of government regulations.

They’re committed to removing any barriers to the construction of new housing, demanding changes to the City’s building code. The result will be more housing, yes, but not the kind San Francisco so desperately needs – affordable homes for working people.

Finally, they call for a “tough-love” approach to San Francisco’s drug crisis, demanding that users who resist treatment be arrested. No matter that countless scientific studies have proven that forced treatment rarely succeeds.

“The literature does not support mandatory treatment on any level to help the public health situation,” said Daniel Ciccarone, a physician and professor of family community medicine at the University of California at San Francisco, who studies drug addiction.

Mayor London Breed is listening. That should come as no surprise since she was elected with sizeable campaign contributions from the tech and real estate industries. So are her political allies, recently elected supervisors Matt Dorsey and Joel Engardio who won their elections due to corporate largesse.

These big-money backers are already receiving a handsome return on investment. Breed’s blueprint for meeting the state’s housing requirements – enthusiastically supported by Dorsey and Engardio – is nothing more than a gift to wealthy backers. Among its proposals is relaxing height restrictions on future housing developments. Tenants living in rent-controlled apartments could find themselves displaced as older buildings are torn down to make way for luxury high-rises, adding to the glut of expensive housing now sitting empty.

Forced drug treatment has also earned the mayor’s full-throated support as well as that of Dorsey and Engardio. On her orders, the San Francisco Police Department is arresting drug users, a return to failed “war on drugs” policies that will drain scarce city resources and lead to the loss of countless lives.

Two elected officials, who have been reliable obstacles to the billionaire takeover of San Francisco, now find themselves with targets on their backs. In recent months, GrowSF launched the “Clear Out Connie” and “Dump Dean” campaigns to oust District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan and District 5 Supervisor Dean Preston. Preston and Chan are champions for regular San Franciscans, tenacious fighters for tenants as well as for affordable housing. A word of advice: Pay close attention to the candidates backed by corporate interest in the November 2024 election.

Moritz recently earned headlines for being one of a half-dozen tech billionaires to buy 55,000 acres of pristine farmland in Solano County. Their plan is to build a 21st century “utopia,” a Garden of Eden for the well-heeled. Locals are promising to fight back.

San Franciscans would do well to follow their example. Moritz, and his billionaire brethren are aiming to refashion our City to their exacting specifications. Theirs is a vision that has little room for most of us.

Julie Pitta is a member of the executive board of the Berniecrats. She is a former senior editor for Forbes Magazine and staff writer for the Los Angeles Times. Email: julie.pitta@gmail.com. X (Twitter): @juliepitta. Find an archive of her columns online at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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Assembly

Assemblymember Phil Ting

State Grants Target Retail Theft

Many of us have seen the viral images of retail theft across news outlets and social media. Large groups of thieves enter a retailer and steal thousands of dollars of merchandise in a matter of minutes.

Luxury stores in Union Square have been among the high-profile targets across the state, but small businesses haven't been immune. The crime can be devastating to the business, traumatic for workers and unsafe for shoppers. The loss often leads to higher prices for consumers.

To help crack down on these brazen smash-and-grab crimes, I championed with Gov. Gavin Newsom a way for the state to step in with funding, making it California's largest single investment to combat organized retail crime. Nearly $270 million in grants have been awarded to 55 law enforcement agencies to increase arrests and prosecutions of these cases.

I'm happy to report my district, Assembly District 19, will receive some of this state funding:

- San Francisco Police: $15 million.
- San Mateo County Sheriff: $15 million.
- Daly City Police: $8 million.

These grants can be used to staff retail theft investigative units, install advanced surveillance technology, train loss prevention officers, create new task forces, foster increased cooperation with businesses and the community and conduct blitz operations.

In San Francisco, the funding will help the police department address persistent staffing shortages. They will be able to hire more personnel, allow overtime for patrol officers, and purchase vehicles and equipment.

Included in the $270 million grant program is funding to 13 district attorneys' (D.A.) offices with each receiving $2 million for vertical prosecution. That means the D.A. will be hiring or assigning staff dedicated to major retail theft cases, rather than assigning these cases to multiple attorneys as they pass through the system. San Francisco is one of the recipients, and the office has indicated they will use the money for a fully dedicated prosecutor and investigator, both assigned to the City's repeat and group offenders of retail theft.

Instead of the cases being distributed in the D.A.'s general felonies group, a vertical system allows the new staff to familiarize themselves with store managers and workers, while developing the ability to identify witnesses. These relationships could be key to successful convictions. The D.A.'s Office also says these extra resources will help them build strong cases against fencers and resellers who make these crimes lucrative.

The $270 million is distributed over three years with the first installment going out in October 2023. This state support from arrest to conviction is critical to the efforts in stopping organized retail theft, and it helps ensure law enforcement has the resources they need to stop it. I know there are other criminal activities that need similar attention, and the Legislature is looking at more ways to enhance state/local partnerships to help make our neighborhoods safer.

Phil Ting represents the 19th Assembly District, which includes the west side of San Francisco along with the communities of Broadmoor, Colma and Daly City as well as part of South San Francisco. Find an archive of his columns at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Homeless Encampments

Continued from page 5

removed, allegedly without an offer of shelter. The more impactful issue to be addressed by the courts (and likely the U.S. Supreme Court), however, is whether removing an encampment without an offer of shelter constitutes "cruel and unusual punishment" in cities like San Francisco, which do not have outright bans on sleeping or lying in public. The City of San Francisco is arguing that it is under no constitutional obligation to make an offer of shelter before removing encampments because there are miles of other public spaces where homeless individuals can legally sleep on a sidewalk or in a park, 20 out of 24 hours of the day.

After spending millions of dollars to address San Francisco's homeless problem, the legal resolution sought seems to be the age-old solution of having the police roust desperate people sleeping on the streets to tell them to "move along." This will certainly help politicians intent on cleaning up the City before big events, such as the recently held Dreamforce conference or the upcoming Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit scheduled for Nov. 12-18, but it does nothing for the poor, the mentally ill, or the addicted who need economic and medical help.

Linda Badger is a Richmond District resident, lawyer and writer who contributes to the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

BAZAAR CAFE OCTOBER EVENTS

Free events at Bazaar Cafe, 5927 California St. (All events 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted)
Literature: Every First Sunday 6-8:30 p.m., Bazaar Writers Salon. Oct. 1 features Michael Dumanis, Randall Mann, Mira Rosenthal, and Andrena Zawinski.
Music: Friday, Oct. 6, Matt Jaffe Songwriter Showcase, Saturday, Oct. 14, The Richmond Revue. Saturday, Oct. 21, Guitar Showcase with Teja Gerken.
Kids: Sunday, Oct. 15, 10 a.m., Stinkytales Puppet Show, growing caring and compassionate kids one story at a time.
Comedy: Oct. 20, Danny Dechi Comedy Showcase.

THE CHILDREN'S BOOK PROJECT

The Children's Book Project is a San Francisco-based nonprofit that provides free books for children and youth living in economically vulnerable communities to help improve literacy and close the achievement gap. You can help create equitable access to books by donating new or gently used books that your children have outgrown. If you have good condition books to donate, our Book Bank is open by appointment at 2166 Palou St., or find a local book drop at childrensbookproject.org.

COMMENTARIES AND LETTERS

From the editor: All commentaries we publish are the opinions of the writers and should not be considered our editorial stances on issues. We strive to remain neutral and offer a balance of viewpoints. We invite readers who wish to express their opinions to send a letter to the editor to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Word limit for the newspaper is 350, for the website, 500. RichmondSunsetNews.com.

DRAMA WITH FRIENDS

Drama With Friends is a free ZOOM THEATRE. Want to act? Join a troupe of older actors looking to expand our acting pool. We present short plays by local playwrights every third Monday night of the month followed by a Q&A with the playwright. Prospective actors need to set aside time for two or three one-hour rehearsals a month. Want to join the audience? You're welcome too. Check out the Community Living Campaign for further information (sfcommunityliving.org/event/dwf) or write judygoddess@gmail.com.

FREE TECH SUPPORT

Felton's Tech Squad is providing free basic tech support for older adults and people with disabilities in the Richmond District. Ask questions regarding how to navigate your smartphone, tablet or laptop. One-on-one session in English, Russian, Cantonese or Mandarin. Friday, Oct. 13, 1:30-3 p.m. at the Richmond Branch Library (351 Ninth Ave). Drop-ins welcome. For more information, call 415-474-1558 or email techsquad@felton.org.

FREE ADAPTIVE BIKE PROGRAM

Serving people with disabilities in SF parks, the free Adaptive Bike Program is presented by a partnership between SF Rec. and Park, Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) and SF Municipal Transportation Agency. Ride an adaptive bike in two lovely locations either in Golden Gate Park (every first and third Saturday) or on The Great Highway (every second and fourth Saturday). Reservations are required (limited availability on some bikes). To reserve a bike, contact BORP Cycling Center at 510-848-2930 or e-mail at cycling@borp.org by 5 p.m. on the Thursday before the event.

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"Storytime." Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11-11:30 a.m.

"Lego Free Play." Build skyscrapers, forts, castles or whatever your imagination desires with LEGO. For ages 5 and older. Oct. 1, 3:30-5 p.m.

"Performance: La Familia Peña-Govea: Tricycle Music Fest." La Familia Peña-Govea is a three-generation family band playing bilingual children's music based in Latin folk traditions. The band, parents Miguel Govea and Susan Peña, daughter René and grandson, Diego, has played an eclectic mix of cumbias, rancheras, boleros, and more for decades in the Bay Area. Their original compositions address themes such as socio emotional regulation, science, cultural pride, and communication skills, and will get the whole family dancing. La Familia Peña-Govea brings the party wherever they go!
Learn more about Tricycle Music Fest at SFPL TMF website. Sunday, Oct. 22, 2-3 p.m.

"Workshop: Paper Flowers for Filipino Heritage Celebration." Make an everlasting bouquet of Philippine florals with ChiChai. We'll use different paper cutting and folding techniques to make these flowers and leaves come to life. All skills welcome to join. Sunday, Oct. 22, 3:15-4:15 p.m.

"Storytime: For Babies" Playtime follows directly after the Storytime. Limited to 46 participants, tickets required. Monday, Oct. 30, 11–11:30 a.m.

CHILDREN AND TEENS:

"Activity: DIY Eclipse Viewer." Make a simple pinhole eclipse viewer, play an eclipse game and read an eclipse story in honor of the annular eclipse on Saturday, Oct. 14. For ages 8–18. Thursday, Oct. 5, 3-5:30 p.m.

ADULT PROGRAMS:

"Breath meditation and Gentle Yoga with Don Narin." Guided meditation for calming and stress release joint with gentle form of yoga that anyone can do - on the floor (bring your own mat) or seated in one of the library's chairs. No movement beyond what is comfortable for you. Very relaxing and calming. Every Thursday, 11-12:30 a.m.

"Activity: The Art of Wycinanki." Eastern European Heritage celebration. Learn about Eastern European paper-cutting folk art and make your own Wycinanki flower. Space is limited to 20 patrons. Reservations required: 415-355-5600. Sunday, Oct. 1, 2-3:30 p.m.

"Read Together, Silent Book Club." Bring any book (fiction or nonfiction) for a period of silent reading followed by a discussion when you share what you are reading with others. The club meets every other Wednesday, Oct. 4 and 18, 3-5 p.m.

"Workshop: Medicare 101." Licensed health insurance agent, Elena A Kotenkova presents information on many changes in Medicare and Medi-Cal this year. In English and Russian. Thursday, Oct. 12. English session: 2-3 p.m. Russian session: 3-4 p.m.

"Tutorial: Drop-In Tech Support for Older Adults with the Felton Institute Tech Squad." Get one-on-one help with your phone or tablet, searching the Internet, setting up an email account and other basic computer tasks. Cantonese-speaking Tech Squad members are available to assist, Friday, Oct. 13, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

"Performance: Łowiczanie Polish Folk Ensemble." Resident dance company of the Polish Club in San Francisco, a group of skilled and dedicated dancers present traditional dance from Poland. Saturday, Oct. 14, 1-2 p.m.

"Presentation: Calfresh (food stamps)." Sarah Li, community resource coordinator at the Richmond Center, will share information on how to apply for CalFresh (food stamps) and share new income and benefits guidelines. No reservation needed. Saturday, Oct. 14, 3:30-4:30 p.m.

"Workshop: Westside Affordable Housing Sunset and Richmond." This workshop offers affordable housing resources and educational information for the Richmond and Sunset districts. You will learn how to apply for affordable housing, who qualifies for affordable housing, how many units will be built in the community and why it matters to the Richmond and Sunset residents. In English. Please reserve: 415-355-5600. This program is in partnership with Self Help for the Elderly. Tuesday, Oct. 17, 2-3:30 p.m.

"Workshop: Grow Your Own Japanese Bonsai Tree." Start your own bonsai tree to bring home! While potting a seed that will grow into a bonsai tree, you will also learn about the history of bonsai and some basic information about bonsai care and maintenance presented by Dory Schrader, co-founder of Bonsaify. Each participant will also receive access to "Very Basics of Bonsai", a short e-book. This program is in partnership with BSSF, Bonsai Society of San Francisco. Space is limited. To make a reservation, call 415-355-5600. Monday, Oct. 23, 2-3:30 p.m.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Happy October birthday to Celeste Aquino, David Barker, Zarek Bastani, Estella Bond, Diane Callman, Hannah Chon, Megan Cresci, Carlos Joey Dardon, J9 Downing, MJSD, David Gillies, Kathy Hom, Tam Huynh, Laura Johnson-Bickford, Matt Kauffman, Sidney Keith, Dylan King, Maya Klein, Sue Kozakiewicz, Becky Lee, Brittney Lee, Matthew Leigh, Helen Liu, Kris Lue, Lynda Nguyen, Michelle Nicoletti, Kyle O'Rourke, Melissa Judith Poon, Sue Roberts, Charlotte Schmidlapp, Michelle Schulz, Andy Sponring, Lucia Maria Sullivan, Jeffrey Trotter, Chelsea Tsang, Kari Vides, Gale Ward, Athena Weber, Maxwell Zachary White, Madison Wong, Ruby Yep, Simone Yuen and Barbara Zartun. *To add a name to the monthly birthday list, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Free.*

JOB OPPORTUNITY

Yaskawa America, Inc. seeks Embedded Software Engineer B-Motion w/ bach or for deg equiv in EE, ME, CE or rel fld & 2 yrs exp in job offer or embed sftwr des (Also acept mast or for deg equiv in EE, ME, CE or rel fld). Must have crswrk or exp w C++, embed sftwr, mot ctrl & RTOS. Salary $135-155K. Apply to HR, 150 Spear St. Ste 700, San Francisco, CA 94105 or online www.yaskawa.com/about-us/careers.

MEET THE EDITOR OF THE RICHMOND REVIEW

Meet the editor of the Richmond Review: You are invited to meet with Michael Durand, editor and publisher of the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers and the RichmondSunsetNews.com website. Bring your story ideas, feedback, suggestions, questions, announcement items and advertising inquiries. We are also welcoming new writers and photographers interested in contributing stories and photos. The Meet the Editor session is at the One Richmond storefront, 802 Clement St., every second Wednesday of the month, 1-2:30 p.m. For more information, call 415-706-6428 or email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com. Scheduled appointments not necessary but appreciated.

MNEMONIC DEVICES

Announcing Mnemonic Devices: The Constructed Sculpture of Paul Baker. Opening Reception: 1-3 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 4, and running October 4 – 30. Longtime Richmond District artist Paul Baker proudly invites everyone to attend, and explains the title: "People may know a standard mnemonic device–perhaps helping them remember the order of the planets. Well, mine are not only in plural, the sculptures are actual 3-D machines that help a viewer regain something from the past." See Paul's work at c-clampstudios.com. Further information: vargas.missioncollege.edu Vargas Art Gallery, Gillmore Center, Mission College, 3000 Mission College Blvd., Santa Clara. Phone: 408-855-5007.

ONE RICHMOND COMMUNITY MARKET

The launch of the One Richmond Community Market is aimed at enhancing food security and fostering community connections. Once a week on Wednesdays, we will provide several items of fresh food for participants. To ensure this initiative reaches those who can benefit most, we have specific criteria in place. Please go to onerichmondsf.com/one-richmond-community-market for eligibility and registration process. Contact: onerichmondsf@gmail.com.

ONLINE-ONLY CONTENT

Visit our website, to find features that you can't find in the newspaper. We recently uploaded three albums of Outside Lands 2023 photos. Look for "Cooking Together," by Shanta Nimbark Sacharoff, "Overtures and Undertows," a column by Noma Faingold, a talented writer and longtime contributor to the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers. Business features include, "Business Profile" by John Oppenheimer and "A Shot of Salvation" by Deno Gellepes. Check out the recent "Photos of the Month" gallery. RichmondSunsetNews.com.

'PHOTOS OF THE MONTH' GALLERY ONLINE

Photographers are invited to submit three of their best photos for consideration to be published in the "Photos of the Month" gallery on RichmondSunsetNews.com. The website averages 20,000 views per month. Please submit photos as jpegs. Please submit on the 15th of each month. For more information, email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com or call 415-706-6428.

REFUSE REFUSE CLEANUPS

Thursday, Oct. 5, 10:30 a.m.–noon, SF Village Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/413075/.
Thursday, Oct. 5, 3:30–4:30 p.m., One Richmond Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/528372/.
Friday, Oct. 6, 8–9 a.m., Morning Coffee Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/513212/.
Friday, Oct. 6, 3:30–5 p.m., Clement Street Happy Hour Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/437706/.
Saturday, Oct. 7, 10–11:30 a.m., KEEP Ocean Beach Clean, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/399341/.
Sunday, Oct. 8, 10 a.m.–noon, Outer Richmond Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/450069/.
Tuesday, Oct. 10, 3:30–4:30 p.m., Richmond Library Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/553131/.
Saturday, Oct. 14, 10–11:30 a.m., KEEP Ocean Beach Clean, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/399341/.
Saturday, Oct. 21, 10–11:30 a.m., KEEP Ocean Beach Clean, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/399341/.
Saturday, Oct. 28,10 a.m.–noon, Richmond District Cleanup, mobilize.us/togethersf/

Continued on page 11

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Continued from page 10

event/441884/.
Saturday, Oct. 28, 10–11:30 a.m., KEEP Ocean Beach Clean, mobilize.us/togethersf/event/399341/.

REINSTATE 58

If you plan on leaving your home to your children, you may want to sign the petition at forcalifornians.com. Proposition 58, passed in 1986 – with 75% of California voter approval – allowed for the transfer of property from parent to child WITHOUT triggering reassessment of property taxes. It has been extremely important for families to climb the economic ladder and build some intergenerational financial stability. This was lost in 2021. Reinstate 58. – Volunteers forcalifornians.com.

SF MODEL YACHT CLUB ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Set your sights on Spreckels Lake when the San Francisco Model Yacht Club celebrates its 125th anniversary. View displays of model power boats and sail boats. Talk with club members and learn about their boats.

- San Francisco Sailing Science Center Exhibits – fun, interactive experiences for all ages, sailor or not.
- Ragtop/Stinkpot Relay Regatta – a friendly relay competition that cleverly includes skippers and boats from the Power Squadron, R/C Sail Squadron, and Freesail Squadron.
- Have-A-Go for Public – "Thumbs on sticks!" – try running a model with some individual instruction.
- SFMYC Club Building Open House – visit the historic 1937 building that serves as a boat storage facility and meeting location for our members.

Learn about the history of the oldest continuously operating model yacht club in the U.S. The club was founded in 1898. Spreckels Lake, in Golden Gate Park at Fulton Street and 36th Avenue, was specifically designed for model yachting. It was completed in 1904. The club hosts numerous regional, national and international events at the lake. Saturday, Oct. 29, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Learn more at sfmyc.org.

SF WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

The San Francisco Walk to End Alzheimer's is full of flowers, each carried by someone committed to ending this disease. Because, like flowers, our participants don't stop when something's in their way. Alzheimer's isn't going away and we wont stop raising funds and awareness for a breakthrough in the fight against Alzheimer's and all other dementia. Please join us Saturday, Nov. 4, 9 a.m.-noon, at Pier 27 in San Francisco. Register: alz.org/sanfranciscowalk. Want to volunteer? Call the Alzheimer's Association office any time at 415-463-8507 or email sfwalk@alz.org.

SENIOR NEEDS A HOME

Senior lady, quiet, with references, needs a place to live at a private residence in the west area of San Francisco. Having arthritis, she avoids flights of steps and hills. Uses public transportation. Call 415-561-9275 if you or someone you know can provide her a home.

STAMP COLLECTOR AND STAMP COLLECTIONS

Stamp collector is buying stamps and stamp collections. I am buying "older stamps" from the 1800s to 1930. American Philatelic Society member since 1986. Pictures are appreciated. Call or text message 415-533-0761.

SUPERNATURAL AT THE CALIFORNIA ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

Hop on your broomstick and head over to the California Academy of Sciences for a heart-thumping and brain-tingling good time at its annual SuperNatural event on Friday, Oct. 27, 6:30-9 p.m. Shake your bones at a silent disco in Steinhart Aquarium. Feed your sweet tooth at trick-or-treat stations. Marvel at mystical magic shows. This freaky fun-for-all-ages event will also feature face painting and an exclusive teen lounge. For all the gory details, visit calacademy.org/supernatural.

AUTHOR PRESENTS "TORN LILACS"

San Francisco author and historian Henry Michalski will be presenting his acclaimed book, "Torn Lilacs," at the West Portal Branch Library on Oct. 7. Recently, Michalski presented his work at the Anza and Richmond branch libraries. "Torn Lilacs" is the true story of what his parents endured during World War II. It's a love story which begins in Poland but shifts early on to regions rarely written about, such as Siberia and Kazakhstan, where the author was born shortly after the war.

WRITING AND EDITING SERVICE

I am a California licensed attorney who is able to help with many of your writing, editing, and proofreading needs. I can assist with reports, proposals, professional applications, books, resumes and cover letters. I have 25 years of government experience and a 12-year human resources and recruiting background. Recently, I edited a manuscript for one author and provide ongoing editorial support to another. I welcome large and small projects. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns or feedback. Email: writerseditors17@gmail.com or call/text 415-407-7328. I look forward to working with you.

Announcements: $1 per word, 20 word minimum. Share birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, births, obituaries, graduations, sports highlights, business accomplishments, retirements, college admissions, etc.

FREE: Add a name to the monthly birthday list or a community event announcements free of charge.

We support small businesses: Free announcements for small businesses celebrating an anniversary or other significant milestone or event. Send announcement to Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com.

Announcements will run in the Richmond Review and Sunset Beacon newspapers (36,200 copies) and on RichmondSunsetNews.com (20,000+ views per month). Ads must be pre-paid. Deadline: 20th of the month. Mail check to: P.O. Box 16035, S.F., CA 94116. Call 415-706-6428 or email editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com for more details.

VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Make a Difference in the Lives of Many

The San Francisco Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program
is recruiting volunteers to visit and provide support to seniors
and persons with disabilities living in long-term care facilities.

To Learn More, Call (415) 751-9788

You can also email us or learn more online:
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Alexandria Theatre Development

Continued from page 1

this together and work it out because we can do this."

"This property, in order to be feasible to be developed, we know the neighborhood has many concerns," Lee said. "If it stays vacant, it always has a lot of issues, so we understand. We are as concerned as everybody else.

"This is not an easy project. It's a relatively big project," he said. "And the beginning of this year, the storms happened. We know this blade sign was blown off. And we know we have to recover it for certain, basic historical elements and also how to do a project that can benefit everybody."

On Aug. 16, Lee and his attorney Nick Colla went before the Board of Appeals asking to rescind a January NOV issued for "general negligence of maintaining and up keeping the subject historic property," after DBI determined that the blade side hanging off the building above the marquee posed a public safety hazard.

"Ownership of the property is taking mitigating steps where they can, but we're sort of hamstrung here," Colla told the Board. "It still takes money to maintain a property and this property had been in a decrepit state for 20 years. It preceded this ownership group.

"They're doing what they can to work with the City to make this a safe and habitable and active space but we're hamstrung right now by our dealings with the City," Colla said.

Timespace Alexandria LLC took possession of the property in 2015 (vacant since 2004) and Conditional Use Authorization for a development plan – which included swimming pools plus learning and business centers – was issued by the Planning Department in October 2019.

"The pandemic hit five months later; in the two-and-a-half years that application process took, financing fell through," Colla said. "The lending circumstances changed. We submitted a subsequent application to explore a density bonus, but the City permitting process and dealing with the City was very difficult in the early stages of the pandemic. There's a misconception here that my client is a derelict property owner, but I think the record will reflect that there have been substantial efforts throughout the process to find new ways to reactivate the space.

"We've met resistance from the City at every step of the way," he said.

Tina Tam, the deputy zoning administrator for the SF Planning Department, claimed the resistance was actually coming from Timespace Alexandria LLC.

"Based upon numerous complaints filed with (DBI), there are serious concerns about the safety of this building," Tam said.

"More recently, the property owner filed a permit to remove the blade sign in front of the theater, citing imminent public life-safety dangers," she said. "Building demolition by neglect is a big concern for this building. We have seen in the past when property owners allow a building to deteriorate to the point that demolition becomes necessary or restoration becomes unreasonable.

"The NOV is clear that we want the property owners to comply with the recorded conditions. We want to see regular maintenance and upkeep of the theater, and the architectural features and the historic details be protected," she explained. "What we're asking for in the NOV is a defined schedule of when stabilization and protection of the building can happen. Despite numerous attempts and multiple enforcement notices, the property owner has not provided this information to us."

Board of Appeals Commissioner Alex Lemberg acknowledged that Lee had submitted permits to the Planning Department and DBI; however, he did not see consistent work being done on those permits.

Yorke Lee, owner of the Alexandria Theatre, joined District 1 Supervisor Connie Chan to announce that they are now exploring a development agreement to build 76 residential housing units there, while maintaining historical elements of the theater building. *Photo by Thomas K. Pendergast.*

"Some of them were contingent on approvals on new scope of work that took two years," Colla explained. "When they commenced work on restoration, they determined that their structural engineering estimates were off and they couldn't move forward."

Lee said they did do some work to maintain the property.

Lemberg asked if any of the permits were carried through to completion and finalized.

Colla said some of them the permitted work was completed and he said there was a "good faith" effort to follow through with the work.

Lemberg then referred to a list of permits the owner was issued.

"I think there's one of them that was completed out of at least a dozen here," Lemberg said. "I can't agree with your assessment that that is a 'good faith' effort to act under these building permits."

Tam said the department is asking Lee to take immediate action to keep the property safe and secured and to keep the theater from further deterioration until a future project is identified, approved and constructed.

"Their response to our request to date has been vague, non-specific and open-ended," she said. "It's clear that the property owner doesn't want to commit to any construction and completion deadlines; not for assessing the physical and deteriorating conditions of the property, not for protecting the building from further decay and not for restoring the historic blade sign."

The Board of Appeals unanimously voted to deny the appeal and uphold the NOV.

Meanwhile, the move to give the building landmark status has been continued to the Nov. 1 meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

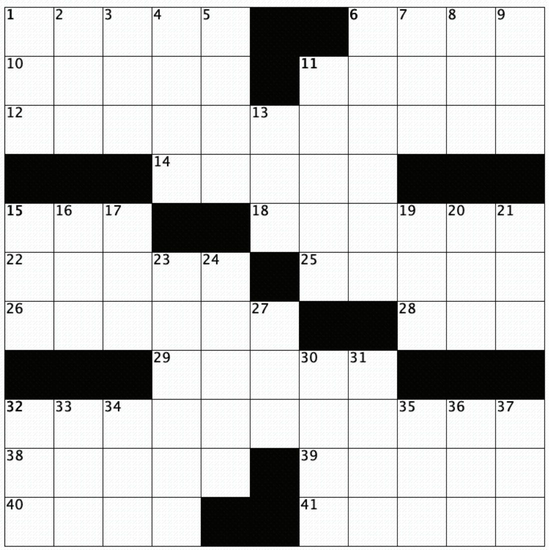
"This is a historical resource site and you must recognize that's what it is already," Chan said at the Sept. 19 press conference. "We could go about landmarking this, but we could also go into the trajectory, which is what we're announcing today, as exploring a development agreement, still preserving those characteristics that is already clearly defined and required to protect.

"But how do we work together to have a balanced approach to be able to move it forward?" Chan asked. "I do believe that it allows us to reinforce where the City is at, meaning that we want everyone to preserve the history of San Francisco because we deserve that."

10TH ANNUAL
WINE ON THE WESTSIDE
WINE & WHISKEY
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12
6:30 – 9:30 PM
PARK CHALET · 1000 GREAT HIGHWAY
Ticket & Sponsorship Information Available Online
The Richmond

Happy Halloween!

Jess Goldstein



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ACROSS

1. 41-across alternative
6. Feature of a 2-down Halloween costume
10. Low-level
11. Halloween costume with a white bedsheet
12. Result of too much Halloween candy
14. Respond to Harry Styles, say
15. Boom box?
18. Interview excerpts
22. Danger
25. Exams with a max. score of 180
26. Young superstar
28. Frying aid
29. USC graduate Obama
32. Didn't beg for candy, say
38. Deets
39. Flood defense
40. Breathe heavily
41. See 1-across

DOWN

1. "The Big Bang Theory" network
2. Halloween costume of an unwelcome apartment sight
3. Prefix with metric
4. Pic takers
5. "Black Panther" villain
6. Halloween costume requiring lots of purple makeup
7. Green New Deal rep.
8. Kinda
9. 5G predecessor
11. Demonic Halloween being
13. ___ au vin
15. Snapchat or Notes
16. "I'm not impressed"
17. TSA ___-Check
19. Certain dance style
20. BART info
21. Tax form ID
23. Halloween costume that may involve wings or antennae
24. Oodles
27. Browser with a butterfly logo
30. Sword part
31. Dell alternative
32. Deadly snake
33. Place to get peeled
34. Halloween costume accessorized by rollerblades, or a fur coat, or a cowboy hat, or just.....sand
35. Halloween costume with an apple that would work best in warm weather
36. Green pasture
37. Until now

Commentary

Brian Quan

Learning from Our City's Ghosts

With Halloween later this month, I find myself meditating on ghosts.

I always enjoy thinking about the Richmond District's secret, nearly forgotten part of San Francisco history; the neighborhood used to house many cemeteries before we built houses here.

While Colma is now the city with more dead residents than living residents, the Richmond used to have the honor of housing our residents that passed beyond the mortal coil. From Lincoln Park with the Golden Gate Cemetery, aka City Cemetery, to the "Big Four" that encircled Lone Mountain – Laurel Hill, Odd Fellows, Masonic and Calvary – this sleepy neighborhood could have had a very different character had residents not pushed to improve the surrounding infrastructure.

Even though the cemeteries had been officially declared a nuisance and closed, their presence can still be felt today if you know where to look. Physically you can find a monument or two in Lincoln Park or tombstones down on the shore below Lands End. While a majority of their physical bodies have been moved out of the City, perhaps their spirits still linger on and wander the west side. Maybe one can be seen on All Hallow's Eve near the Columbarium tucked away by Rossi Park or among the manicured greens of Lincoln Park Golf Course when the veil between worlds is thinnest.

What about some other ghosts that currently haunt us in the present beyond these potential spirits from the former cemeteries? One of my favorite playwrights, Henrik Ibsen, wrote a play titled "Ghosts" that uses them as a metaphor of social issues that were hidden beneath the surface. Items that linger on from our collective past based on decisions made long ago. The figurative ghosts that have guided the neighborhood since before many of us were even born maintain a hold on how we view what is considered the norm.

The structure of our streets was laid out over a century ago for the streetcar lines that brought residents out from the City Center – wide streets and intersections were built for the more heavily used lines and turnaround points, which is still evident at the terminus of the N-Judah in the Sunset. Until the rails were ripped out in 1948 to be replaced by bus lines, the development of the merchant corridors closely followed where old streetcars were put in place.

Narrower residential streets contrast the wide design of corridors like Geary Boulevard and Fulton Street that originally served cable car lines which were replaced by the Municipal Railways, the precursor to Muni. The shift to buses and the increasing car usage that followed took advantage of these wider streets and have been adapting to the limits based on lines laid out more than a century ago. Could the ghosts of the streetcars reclaim our roads as we continue to see modes of transit shift with attempts to move away from fossil fuel dominance?

As more and more things change, the skeletons get buried ever-so-slightly more. More recently we are seeing the transformation of laundromat spaces into restaurants due to long-term cultural shifts. While these are the physical remnants that are still apparent for those who understand what to look out for, there are less obvious items that still hold sway in the present.

Just like with the cemeteries and the streetcars, changes implemented a century ago brought downzoning to the west side with height restrictions. Zoning combined with racial restrictive covenants were used to limit the spread of minorities to the western half of the City. While this worked through the transformative World War II era to contain the flood of transplants to the Bay Area, the Civil Rights era reduced some of these restrictions and allowed minorities to finally own homes on the west side.

So, be on the lookout for these ghosts this month. Not all neighborhood skeletons leave their bones to be found easily. Understanding these ghosts of the neighborhood's past are only the first step to seeing how we can start toward an even better future. While there are some friendly ghosts, if we don't work to overcome the restrictive and exclusionary decisions of the past, they will continue to haunt us. Exorcising the Church of Satan that used to be on California Street isn't the only ghost we have gotten rid of.

Brian Quan is a Richmond District native, co-leader of Grow the Richmond, president of the Chinese American Democratic Club, member of the Park Presidio-Sunset Lions Club and participant in monthly Refuse Refuse S.F. street clean-ups.

LOOK FOR US ON SOCIAL MEDIA
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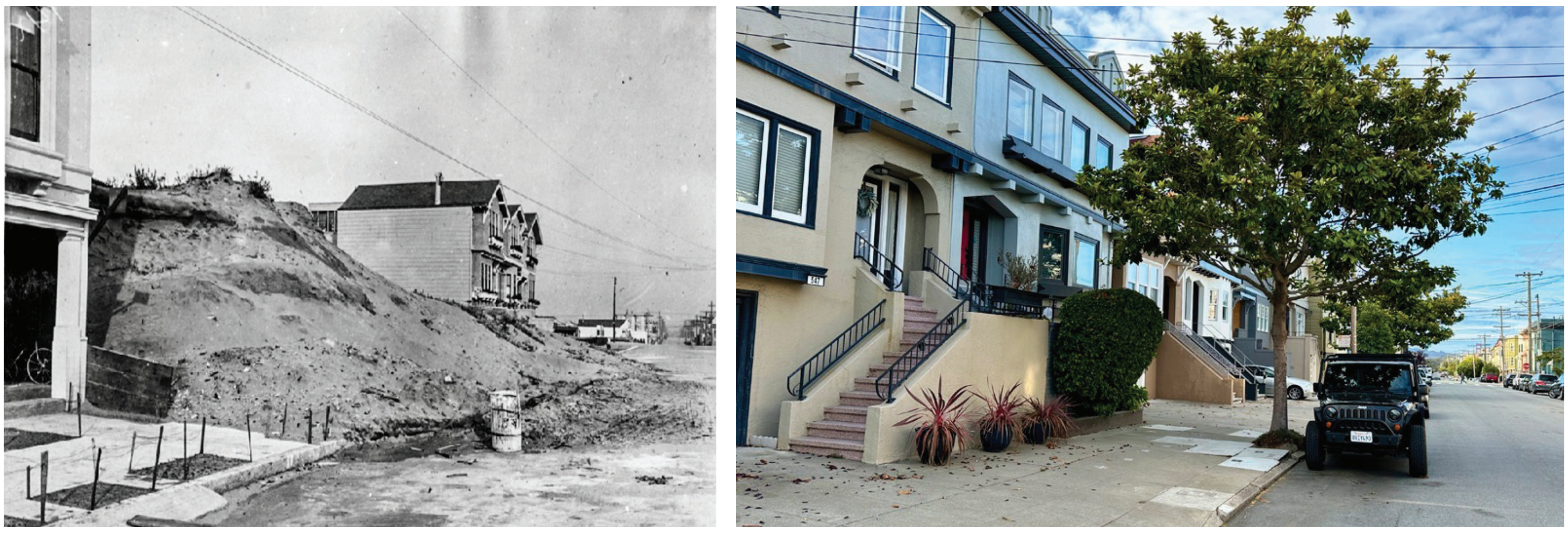
'Then and Now': 20th Avenue Between Anza and Balboa Streets



Left: This photo taken on Dec. 22, 1914, shows the view looking north at the west side of 20th Avenue between Anza and Balboa streets. Drifting sand from an empty lot covers the sidewalk. In the background standing together are 539, 535 and 531 20th Ave., built in 1913. *Photo courtesy of a private collector/Western Neighborhoods Project/OpenSFHistory.* Right: Trees block the view of the trio of 1913 homes. What was once a pile of sand is now the location of homes worth many millions of dollars. Photo taken Sept. 25, 2023. *Photo by Michael Durand.*

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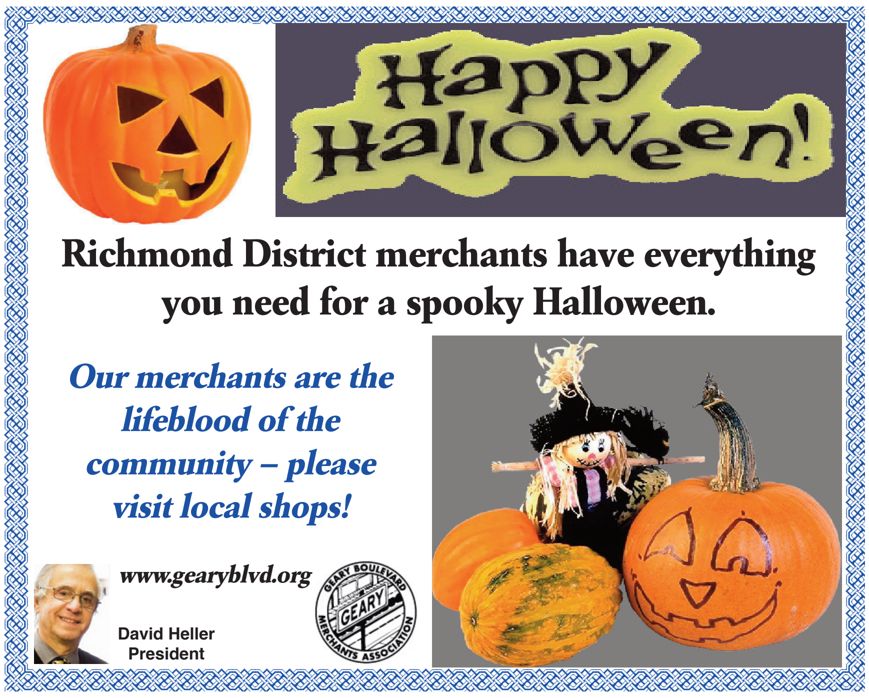

Happy Halloween!
Richmond District merchants have everything you need for a spooky Halloween.
Our merchants are the lifeblood of the community – please visit local shops!
www.gearyblvd.org
David Heller
President
GEARY BOULEVARD MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

If you contributed to either our "Nourish Your Neighborhood Newspaper" campaign or signed up on our Patreon account, we have special Richmond Review branded gifts for you to thank you for your support! We would also like to list your name in the paper to thank you (or you can be the "Anonymous" we list each month). Email Editor@RichmondSunsetNews.com or call 415-706-6428 and we'll make it happen. *Find Patreon information at RichmondSunsetNews.com. All of us at the Richmond Review are sincerely grateful for your generous contributions. Thank you.*

Tunnel Records

Continued from page 1

would be," he explained. "It's really going to lend itself to having two parallel businesses there."

Opening weekend, Friday, Oct. 6, to Tuesday, Oct. 10, is set to have different themes each night, pairing movies and music. Opening night will have a country theme with a record release from local musician Jacob Aranda as well as shows and performances by artist Sarah Bethe Nelson and Noelle and the Deserters. Saturday, Oct. 7, will feature a DJ set from the Sounds of Paradise followed by a showing of Dario Argento's "Phenomena," which will be preceded by a drag show performance.

Next, on Sunday, Oct. 8, the theater will have the Wizard of Oz being shown using Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon for sound effects. This classic combination, according to Bergeron, creates a "sublime, eerie pairing between the two," when done right. This will be followed by the last night's events on Oct. 10 with a performance from the Edelman Family Jazz Band, which will be playing Thelonious Monk tunes. The final event will be the showing of jazz movies "Monk" and "Monk in Europe."

Wintroub said his Taraval Street location (named for the pedestrian tunnel that used to be run underneath the Upper Great Highway from Taraval to the beach) is skewed more toward jazz, soul and international music. He said the new Richmond District location will feature local and independent musicians and bands.

"Adam has been a longtime customer of mine and I've always really liked him and wanted to work with him," Wintraub said. "After they took over the 4 Star, they were looking for creative ideas for the side space that was being used as an art gallery. It's a nice fit for us."

Bergeron said the theater will continue to have more live music events with the new collaboration.

"It will always be a movie theater first and foremost, but I think we will have more live music than we've had in the past," he predicted. In addition, rock documentaries and movies focused on music will be shown primarily at the 4 Star.

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TUNNEL
Records

Tunnel Records owner Ben Wintroub in front of his Taraval Street store. *Courtesy photo.*

"We really want to lean into the rock and roll movie theater kind of vibe," he said.

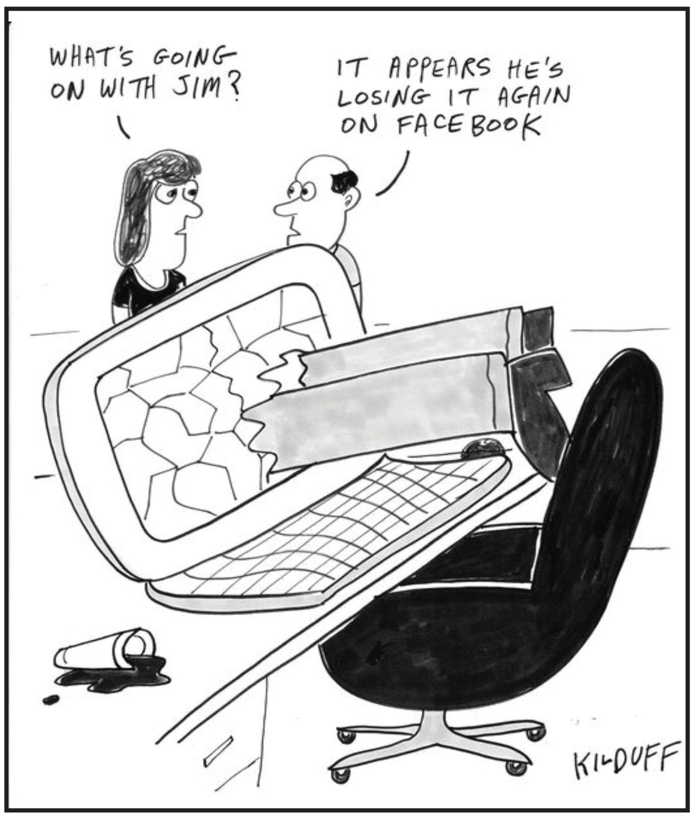
Through this new connection, Bergeron hopes the theater and Tunnel Records will grow together with each other's help.

"I'm hoping we are able to make each other even better by teaming up in this way," he said.

The 4 Star Theater is located at 2200 Clement St. Learn more at 4-star-movies.com. Tunnel Records will be accessible through a side door on 23rd Avenue, north of Clement Street. Learn more at tunnelrecordssf.com.

Kilduff's Korner

By Paul Kilduff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Richmond Autumn Moon Festival

Continued from page 1

as a community."

Ting helped found the festival seven years ago along with then-D1 Supervisor Sandra Lee Fewer, The Richmond Neighborhood Center and the Clement Street Merchants Association.

"I'm so happy to see so many folks out – not just from the Richmond but from other neighborhoods as well – really enjoying the weather, the community, the festival and the booths. It's just wonderful to be out," added Ting.

The Richmond festival featured a line-up of live musical performances, traditional folk dancing, Kung Fu demonstrations, contests and more.

Notably, this year's festival hosted a bunny contest in which residents could bring their pet rabbits out to have audience members vote on "best in show."

"Because this is the year of the rabbit, we are having a bunny contest. It's definitely different and I'm curious to see how many folks bring their rabbits out," said Ting.

"For people who live in the Richmond I hope it helps build a sense of community," Ting said. "For folks who don't know the Richmond area that well, this is a great chance to experience the incredible beauty and diversity we have in this part of the City. We have so many amazing restaurants and stores, too."

The Autumn Moon Festival is typically celebrated in Chinese culture, as well as other Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea, and is known as a time for thanksgiving. It is held as a way to welcome great harvest and peace.

The sound of drumming filled the streets as traditional dragon dancers sported bright and colorful costumes of intricate design on the event's main stage. Dating back to 206 BCE, the dragon dance art form symbolizes harvest, prosperity and abundance for this time of year.

The One Tribe Martial Arts Academy came from Concord, CA, to deliver a Kung Fu demonstration for main stage audience members. The academy is an affiliate of Tat Wong Kung Fu based in the Richmond District. *Photo by Nicole Gonzales.*

Centuries ago, dragon dancing was performed as a ceremony for worshiping ancestors and calling for rain. Now, the dance is done primarily as entertainment and often performed during Chinese New Year and other cultural celebrations.

Various merchants, organizations and nonprofits showed out to the festival to support the community. The Richmond Neighborhood Center, YMCA SF and the Asian Family Support Center, among others, were present.

"We're here to support the community," said Michael Chang, a youth librarian with the San Francisco Public Library.

Chang operates the library's mobile outreach program, the Booksmobile. The vehicle acts as a portable library where residents are able to learn about various resources, check out books and sign up for a library card.

Parked near the festival exit, the Booksmobile also offered several boxes of free literature.

"We go to special events, after-school programs or senior centers to promote literacy and accessibility," Chang said. "We were invited to be here to help spread knowledge in the community about what the library can offer them, and of course to encourage people to get library books.

"We have a selection of free books and magazines for people to look through or take home, a lot of them are written in Chinese or Mandarin," added Chang.

Rebeca Muniz, of the Tat Wong Kung Fu Academy, spoke to festival goers about the school and its resources. Muniz has been training with the organization as a part of the black belt club.

"We're just here trying to make sure the community knows about the culture, but also letting them know what skills and type of martial art it is we teach," said Muniz. "We offer lessons that show folks how to defend themselves and let them learn something that brings them strength and confidence."

Located on Clement Street, Tat Wong Kung Fu has been open for more than 30 years.

"For me, I wanted to know how to defend myself and I also just felt the need to be part of a community," added Muniz. "We are out here educating folks on what we can teach them, like discipline, courage, bravery, kindness and humility."

City Hall

Supervisor Connie Chan

Asking Questions, Getting Results

As supervisor, while prohibited by Charter Section 2.114 to directly interfere with the City's administration and operation, we do have the power of inquiry and can hold departments accountable by requesting they provide reports, program data and information on operation policies.

We make these requests by submitting a Letter of Inquiry, to which departments are required to respond within 30 days. This is a way we have insight into departments' programs and operations, and the Board of Supervisors can understand the impact and reach of our City's programs.

Over the last several months, I have made inquiries into several departments, including the status of our emergency response times and traffic safety efforts, the impact of our police department's and district attorney's victim services programs, and the impact of our citywide rent relief program.

Transit and Pedestrian Safety

To better understand transit planning and its impact, including road closures on San Francisco streets, I submitted letters of inquiry to the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD), the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) regarding their emergency response times and Vision Zero staff assignments.

In the report provided by SFFD and SFMTA, dispatch distances for ambulances increased approximately 40% from 2020 to 2022. While initial study indicates staffing shortages and traffic congestion were noted as contributing factors to this increase, the agencies made clear further study is required to understand the impact road closures, Slow Streets and other types of traffic changes have on emergency response times.

I requested SFFD and SFMTA provide an update on their mitigation plans to address dispatch distances with increased response times. As our city population continues to grow, we must do better to ensure our emergency response times are not delayed and our city departments have a plan to mitigate these issues.

Separately, to better understand the concrete implementation of measures that can truly ensure pedestrian safety, I requested SFMTA's and SFPD's plans to enforce moving and traffic violations that endanger cyclists and pedestrians. The report provided in response to my inquiry stated that the city's Focus on the Five program requires 50% of all citations written to target the top five most dangerous behaviors, including speeding, running red lights, failing to yield to pedestrians, running stop signs and failing to yield while turning.

While SFPD has met its goal of citations written for these violations, in a follow up report I requested from SFPD it was noted that traffic enforcement violations in 2022 dropped to 4,006 compared to 129,597 in 2014. In the report, SFPD reported the Vision Zero squad was made up of two sergeants and five officers in 2020, before being disbanded due to staffing levels. While we know our police department suffers staffing shortage, we also should evaluate the current deployment and whether we are effective with the existing staffing in keeping our City safe.

Improving Golden Gate Park Accessibility

We must continue to ensure Golden Gate Park is accessible for all San Franciscans, especially for seniors and individuals with disabilities, now that a significant portion is closed to vehicles. As part of the Golden Gate Park Access and Safety Program, SFMTA and the SF Recreation and Park Department are required to provide quarterly reports on the progress of the implementation of several accessibility improvements to the park. I requested additional detailed information on the departments' efforts, including the timeline and budget for fully accessible shuttles and shuttle improvements, put in place curb ramps and crosswalks making the park fully accessible.

The departments' quarterly reports online at sfrecpark.org/1538/JFK-Promenade not only lack details, they also do not provide a timeline for improving pedestrian safety measures and accessible improvements. It is disappointing to learn that after years of closure of JFK Drive, the departments still have not delivered what they committed to ensure Golden Gate Park is accessible. I will be working with communities to organize, demanding Rec. and Park take immediate actions. If you're interested in joining us in the efforts to push city agencies to deliver their promises on Golden Gate Park Access, please email us at ChanStaff@sfgov.org.

Demanding Public Safety and Victim Services

As former staff in the District Attorney's Office under then-District Attorney Kamala Harris, I understand the importance of providing victims with critical services and ensuring our communities feel safe. It is imperative that our justice systems and service providers deliver equitable care and access to services for all victims in a timely fashion.

This is why I requested data to get a better understanding of victims served by the SFPD and District Attorney's Office, including what services have been provided, protocol to ensure victim privacy, and a status update on the implementation of the Office of Victim and Witness Rights.

Data received by SFPD showed that in 2022, they served 99,053 victims of crime; that's almost 10% of our City's population of little over 800,000 residents who were identified as crime victims. The crimes were broken down by category and the majority of those victims experienced larceny/theft at 51,576. The next highest category was vandalism at 10,195 and burglary at 9,190, followed by 6,921 victims of vehicle theft. There were 6,382 assaults, 4,524 aggravated assaults, 4,335 instances of domestic violence and 3,752 robberies. The remaining victims were the most vulnerable victims of serious and violent crimes with 933 victims of sexual assault, 697 victims of child abuse and 548 victims of elder abuse.

Of these victims, they were further broken down into 25,484 white victims, 12,867 Asian or Pacific Islander, 12,027 Hispanic or Latino, 7,386 Black and 410 American Indian or Native Alaskan. The remainder of the victims were identified as "unknown" or "other" with 40,879 victims. Additionally, the SFPD has a new special unit, the Community Liaison Unit (CLU) that serves the most vulnerable and other-than-English monolingual victims. The CLU served 124 victims in 2022.

According to the DA's Office, in 2022, its Division of Victim Services provided 9,028 victims with services. Again, to correlate the victim information provided by SFPD, out of almost 100,000 victims reported, about 10% directly received services from the DA's Office. Of those, 2,298 were white, 2,228 Hispanic or Latino, 1,691 Black, 1,419 Asian or Pacific Islander, five American Indian or Alaskan Native and 1,387 unknown or other. For both departments the majority of victims served fell between the ages of 25 and 59 with the next highest age category falling in the over 60 category.

While I appreciate the detailed breakdown of data on crime categories, and ethnicity of crime victims in our City, these responses were woefully lacking to my request to better understand how they are responding to instances of targeted crime, and how the departments could do better at serving victims who are targeted because of their race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. We must do more to protect our vulnerable residents of San Francisco and we deserve better by our law enforcement agencies.

Protecting Tenants and Support Small Property Landlords

During the pandemic, the City provided rent relief to tenants and landlords. The program was a success but, with limited funding, we wanted to ensure relief was going to the most in need – including tenants and small property owners. Through a resolution, I requested the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) to prioritize assistance for small property owners. Then I asked MOHCD to provide a report of the amount of rent relief funds received by landlords in San Francisco. The response from MOHCD showed the program's success. An estimated 45% of payments between June 2021 and April 2023 were provided to smaller landlords, 30% of payments went to permanent supportive housing and other affordable units and 19% went to large-scale private property owners.

When we ask questions and demand city service delivery, we hold our city government accountable. And as a result, they must respond and perform better. I take the role as government watchdog seriously and will continue to use the power of inquiry to demand a more transparent and inclusive city government.

If you have an idea for a Letter of Inquiry to better understand the inner workings of our city departments, or create accountability for city services, email my office at ChanStaff@sfgov.org.

Connie Chan represents District 1 on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. She can be reached at 415-554-7410 or chanstaff@sfgov.org. Find an archive of her columns online at RichmondSunsetNews.com.

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